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A MANUAL

OF

BIBLE HISTORY

VOL. I.

The Old Testament

BY

Rev. CHARLES HART, B.A.

CLASSICAL AND ENGLISH MASTER AT ST. CUTHBERT'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

AUTHOR OF "THE STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE"

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A COMPANION VOLUME ON

THE NEW TESTAMENT

It contains 440 pages and 2 Maps.

"This is a difficult piece of work exceedingly well done."—*The Month.*

THE STUDENT'S CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

PREFACE

That a Bible History for Catholic students should be brought out by one of our laity is a hopeful and encouraging sign. Would that a lively interest in all Biblical studies, and indeed in all branches of Christian learning, were not, as some seem to think it may be and should be, confined so closely to the ranks of the clergy! Nowadays the Church, the custodian of Revelation, needs champions drawn from all classes of her sons; and she is right in expecting that amongst the foremost of her defenders should be found some, at least, of those who, though not sharing in the priestly character, yet exercise in her name the sacred office of teaching. Of all who exercise that office she has a right to exact something more than a mere skin-deep acquaintance with that which they teach. Such an acquaintance naught can beget in them but a genuine love of their subject, and the more exalted and sublime the subject, the more ardent ought that love to be. That our teachers are, as a body, thoroughly in love with their subject we have had wide and abundant proof, and the publication of this Manual will be one more welcome evidence of the fact. Particularly is it encouraging to see it brought out at the present moment, when the hands of the invader seem to threaten the existence of our schools, and one is perforce reminded of the sturdy Roman who paid cost-price for a field outside the city gates at the moment when Hannibal was encamped upon it.

The whole aim of the teacher of Bible History cannot be better summed up and set forth than in the words of

St. Augustine, when he is discoursing professedly of the catechist's office in that little book which every Catholic teacher would do well to read.* "Not only," he writes, "must we ourselves keep in view the end of the commandment, which is charity out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned, in order that the whole of our instruction be made to bear upon this end; but it behoves us also to turn towards it and to fix upon it the gaze of him whom we are instructing by our discourse. For with no other object were the things that we read in Holy Scripture written therein before our Lord came, than to commend His coming, and to foreshow the Church that was to be—that is to say, the people of God throughout all nations—His Body: a Body comprising and counting in its ranks all the saints that lived in this world even before His coming, and who believed that He was to come, even as we believe that He has come." For this purpose, too, he goes on to say, were those other things committed to writing and sealed with Divine authority that have been handed down to us after His coming. "Wherefore in the Old Testament the New lies hidden, and in the New is the unfolding of the Old. Not penetrating into that hidden meaning, the carnal-minded, both then and now, understanding things after a carnal fashion, lie under the dominion of a penal fear. But the spiritual, on the other hand, penetrating through the veil, and understanding things after a spiritual fashion, are made free by the love wherewith they are gifted. Amongst such are to be reckoned both those who of old knocked in prayer and found even hidden things opened to them, and those others who now seek in no spirit of pride, lest even things uncovered should be closed to them."

* "On the Catechising of the Uninstructed," chaps. iii. and iv.

The history of the people of God is to be studied in a far different manner from the careers of other peoples whose vicissitudes and achievements did not fall so directly under the ordering hand of prescient Omnipotence. For a Bible teacher to treat Jewish as he would treat Grecian or Roman history, is but to set dry bones before his hearers, and to rob of their prophetic significance those events which happened to the Jews "by way of figure," and which "were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are to come."* Not only are the advent of Christ, His miracles, His sufferings, His death and resurrection, plainly foretold in the books of ancient prophecy; not only do all the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic Law speak of Him, but, by a more wonderful mode of prophecy, events themselves in the lives of men and of the race are so ordained as to speak of Him and of His Church. Here the Divinity doubly intervenes, not only by displaying foreknowledge of the future, but by pressing present events into types of that future. Who does not see in the story of Cain and Abel a figure of Christ and the Jewish people, of the death inflicted upon Him by His brethren, of the curse that fell upon them, of the traitor's mark which they bear about them, but which saves them, as Cain's saved him, from destruction? The ignominy of Christ upon the Cross is prefigured in the drunkenness of Noah. Cham scoffs at his father and is cursed; Sem and Japhet cover their father and are blessed. So the Jews mocked at the humiliation of Christ, as He hung, overpowered by an ecstasy of love, upon His Cross, and malediction swiftly overtook them. On the other hand, the first-fruits of the converts among the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles, compassionated their suffering

* 1 Corinthians x. 11.

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Lord, turning tenderly their gaze away from His shame, and were by Him filled with blessings. Numerous other such figures, equally striking, will at once occur to him who reads and reflects. He need not invent them at his own caprice ; he will find them indicated in abundance by the Fathers, in the liturgy of the Church, in the writings of the Apostles, in the words of Christ Himself. It is for the teacher of Bible History to seize upon such figures and to impress them deeply upon the minds of the children whom he teaches, to bring before them in distinct and bold relief the prophetic utterances regarding Christ and His kingdom upon earth—His Church; to show them how, in St. Paul's words, "Whatsoever things were written were written for our learning,"* and how these all point to Him and lead us to faith in Him, and the love of Him. "What man might not be moved to faith in the doctrine of Christ by such a remarkable chain of events from the beginning, and by the manner in which the epochs of the world are linked together, so that our faith in regard to present things is witnessed to by what happened in the past, and the record of earlier and ancient things is attested by later events?"† Such a consideration is not above the capacity of a child.

By adhering carefully to such a method of imparting Biblical instruction as I have briefly and imperfectly sketched, the author of the present Manual has rendered an important service to all our teachers, and I very heartily commend his work.

✠ GEORGE AMBROSE,
Bishop of Clifton.

* Romans xv. 4.

† St. Augustine, letter cxxxvii., to Volusianus, chap. 15.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE main object aimed at in compiling this work has been to supply a want, much felt in Catholic secondary schools and colleges, for a text-book of Scripture history which may serve not only for class and examination purposes, but as an introduction to the study of the Bible.

That the student may from the very commencement of his studies be made familiar with Scriptural phraseology, the exact words of the Sacred Text, whenever suitable, have been so interwoven with the narrative that the simple grandeur of the many sublime Bible stories may as far as possible be preserved. How far this aim has been secured may be gathered from the words of the Rev. Dr. Wheatley, Professor of Scripture at St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, and official censor of this work, who writes: "What delights me most of all is the way in which you have worked so much of the Sacred Text itself into your narrative. I think it such an advantage that we should become as familiar as possible, even from our youngest years, with the very words of the inspired writings; and as we cannot put Bibles into the hands of young people, such a book as the one you have written will prove of the greatest advantage."

From long experience gained in teaching Bible History, the author has always found that it has been well nigh a

hopeless task for the student to secure, from the text-books in general use, a clear grasp of the historical facts connected with the separate kingdoms of Juda and Israel, as they overlap to such a degree as to render the difficulty most perplexing. To make this part of the work more simple and clear, the affairs of the rival kingdoms have been arranged as far as possible in alternate chapters, so that contemporary events will be found to run parallel; and thus the student, while engaged on one particular kingdom, will have a knowledge of what was at the same being enacted in the other.

As it is intended that the work may serve as a useful aid to the study of the Bible, specially printed maps have been added with names according to the Vulgate spelling, and *a classification of all the Books of the Old Testament*, together with *a summary of the Non-Historical Books*, has been given in an appendix. Moreover, that the reader may understand the significance of our Lord's words, "*All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me*" (Luke xxiv. 44), the chief Messianic prophecies appearing in the Psalms and in the Prophets will be found added to the outline of the respective Books.

In another appendix is given a short account of the *language* of the Old Testament, and of the connection of the dialects spoken in Palestine at the time of our Lord with those of the surrounding peoples. In this appendix, too, it has been thought well to insert a brief history of some of the *principal versions of the Sacred Scriptures*.

On account of the frequent mention in the Bible of the Jews' falling into idolatry previous to the time of the

Babylonian Captivity—but never after their return—a fourth appendix will be found telling something of the nature of the *false gods* they worshipped, and with what deities in Greek and Roman mythology these strange gods are said to have been identified.

The great body of the work itself has been compiled chiefly from the text and notes of Haydock's Douai Bible; but for the part between the two Testaments—that is, from the end of the Books of the Machabees—the Jewish historian Josephus is the one authority.

In presenting this work to the public, the author wishes to acknowledge his obligation to his old master, Rev. H. K. Mann, the learned author of *The Lives of the Popes*, for the great encouragement and valuable assistance received during its progress. To his old pupils, also, Rev. George Wheatley, D.D., Rev. William Dunne, Professor of Theology, St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, and Rev. John Fleming, he owes a debt of gratitude for their having so readily undertaken the task of revising the work in its passage through the press, and for their many excellent suggestions.

St. Cuthbert's Grammar School,
Newcastle-on-Tyne,
June 6, 1906.

N.B.—In the uncertainty which must ever surround Biblical chronology, owing to the corruption that has taken place in the figures in the Biblical texts, the chronological system of Archbishop Ussher has been here adopted, not because it is judged to be the nearest to the truth, as it allows far too short an interval between the creation of

Adam and the birth of our Lord, but because it is the commonly received system.

It might be further noted that, as this book is not intended for students of University standing, questions of Biblical criticism have for the most part been eschewed.

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	Second Captivity of Juda.
599.	Access. of *Sedecias;* 11 yrs. (Sedecias was the last king of Juda.)
588.	Destruction of Jerusalem and Third Captivity of Juda.

B.C.	Kings of Israel. (*With length of reign.*)
897.	Access of *Ochozias;* nearly 2 yrs.
896.	,, *Joram;* 12 yrs.
884.	,, *Jehu;* 28 yrs.
856.	,, *Joachaz;* 17 yrs.
839.	,, *Joas;* in all 16 yrs., 2 yrs. in conjunction with his father.
825.	,, *Jeroboam II.;* 41 yrs.
784-772.	Interregnum, 11½ yrs.
772.	Access. of *Zacharias;* 6 mons.
772.	Access. of *Sellum;* 1 mon.
772.	,, *Manahem;* 10 yrs.
761.	,, *Phaceia;* 2 yrs.
759.	,, *Phacee;* 20 yrs.
739-730.	Interregnum, 9 yrs.
730.	Access. of *Osee;* 9 yrs.
721.	Salmanasar, king of Assyria, lays siege to Samaria, and his successor, Sargon, after reducing the city, casts Osee into chains, and leads the people away as captives, in the sixth year of Ezechias, king of Juda.

B.C.

562. Death of Nabuchodonosor, king of Babylon.
538. Baltassar's feast. Cyrus takes Babylon.
536. End of the Captivity of Juda.
515. Solemn dedication of the new Temple.
483. Assuerus marries Esther.
444. Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
333. Alexander the Great defeats Darius Codomanus at Issus.
331. Battle of Arbela. Persian Empire destroyed.
280 *circa*. The Septuagint translation of the Scriptures.
170. Antiochus Epiphanes sacks Jerusalem.
167. Martyrdom of Eleazar and the Machabees.
Mathathias and his five sons flee to the desert.
166. Judas Machabeus succeeds his father, Mathathias.
164. Death of Antiochus Epiphanes.
161. Death of Judas Machabeus. He is succeeded by his brother Jonathan
153. Jonathan both High Priest and prince.
144. Simon Machabeus succeeds his brother Jonathan.
143. Jewish independence.
141. The government and High-Priesthood made hereditary in Simon.
135. John Hyrcanus succeeds his father ; reigned 29 years.
109. The schismatical temple on Mount Garizim destroyed.
106. Aristobulus I. ; reigned upwards of 1 year.
105. Alexander Janneus ; reigned 27 years.
79. Alexandra ; reigned 9 years.
69. Hyrcanus II. ; reigned 3 months.
Aristobulus II. ; reigned 6 years.
63. Jerusalem taken by Pompey. Judæa is made tributary to Rome.
54. Crassus plunders the Temple.
42. Battle of Philippi.
40. Antigonus usurps the High-Priesthood and the throne.
37. Herod, son of Antipater, declared king of Judaea.
Antigonus, the last of the priest-kings of the Asmonean line, beheaded by Antony at Antioch.
31. Battle of Actium.
29. Octavius takes the title of Augustus.
While Augustus was emperor of Rome, and Herod was king of Judaea, Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem.

A MANUAL OF BIBLE HISTORY

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

B.C. 4004 to B.C. 1635

The Book of Genesis is so called because it treats of the *Generation*, or of the Creation and the beginning of the world. It also contains an account of the progress of events during the space of 2369 years; that is, from the creation of man until the death of Joseph.

PART I

FROM THE CREATION TO THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

B.C. 4004 to B.C. 1921

CHAPTER I

THE CREATION

Heaven and earth created.

The Book of Genesis opens with this simple statement: "*In the beginning God created heaven and earth.*" These divinely-inspired words strike us with peculiar force, teaching us, as they do, that all things were created out of nothing by the power of an Almighty Being. They serve, moreover, to refute all such as ascribe the origin of things to blind chance or fate, as well as those who, like Aristotle, have endeavoured to establish the world's eternity. God, then, was the first cause of the whole universe of heaven and earth, and of all things that belong to them: He spoke, and in a moment *heaven* and *earth* were made. He created heaven with all its angels, and the whole mass of the elements. At first the elements were in a state of confusion and blended together;

but, at the word of God, there arose out of them in the space of six days, or six indefinite *periods of time*, the wonderful order which we now behold, so admirable in its beauty.

At first, then, the earth was *void* and *empty ;* its materials were yet without order, and it was destitute of those countless forms of being that were afterwards to appear upon its surface. Darkness, too, was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: "Let there be light"; and light was made. God divided the light from the darkness, calling the light *day*, and the darkness *night*. This was the work of the *first day*.

On the *second day* God made the firmament, which He called *heaven*.

On the *third day* He separated the dry land from the waters, calling the dry land *earth*, and the waters *seas*. On this day, also, He commanded the earth to bring forth the green herb, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind, each bearing its own peculiar seed for propagation and increase.

On the *fourth day* God said: "Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven to divide the day and the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and years." Thus were created the sun, the moon, and the stars.

On the *fifth day* He made the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air; and He blessed them, saying: "Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea; and let the birds be multiplied on the earth."

On the *sixth day* He commanded the earth to produce cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth according to their kinds: and so was it done.

But the work of creation was not yet complete. On the *sixth day* also, God created man, the last, and, after the angels, the most perfect of all His works; for he alone upon the earth was capable of knowing and loving his Creator. "Let Us,"

The creation of man.

said He, "make man according to Our own image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." Then the Lord God formed the body of man out of the slime of the earth, and breathed into him an immortal soul, giving him, as we have seen, an additional blessing—that of lordship over all creatures upon the earth.

Sabbath-day.

Seeing that all the things He had made were *very good*, God ended His work, and rested on the seventh day. This day He blessed and sanctified; for which reason He imposed upon the Jews the command to keep it holy, thus doubtless renewing an injunction that had existed from the beginning. By Apostolic tradition, however, the first day of the week is now set apart as a day of rest, and specially consecrated to the Divine service, by reason of the resurrection of our Saviour and the sending down of the Holy Ghost on that day. These events have given it a rank above all other days.

Garden of Paradise.

For the abode of the first man, Adam, God planted a Paradise of pleasure, a garden abounding with delights, and furnished with various kinds of trees, the fruit of which was pleasant to eat, and fair to look upon. In the midst of this garden grew two trees, one the Tree of Life, the other the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; "and a river went out of the place of pleasure to water Paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads," namely, the Phison, the Gehon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. God commanded Adam to dress the garden and to keep it; and that he might not, in the midst of such delights, become unmindful of his Creator, He made trial of his fidelity and obedience by imposing upon him one only restraint. "Thou mayest eat," said He, "of the fruit of every tree in Paradise, but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and

Evil thou shalt not eat; for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." If Adam had but continued faithful to this command of Almighty God, his children would have been born in the state of innocence, and, like himself, would have been happy and immortal, enjoying freedom from sickness and pain, and destined in due time to be translated to a happier Paradise.

Naming of the animals.

Having made all the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of the air, God brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: for whatsoever Adam called any living creature, the same is its name. And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field; from which it appears that God had endowed him with the power of speech even from his first creation.

Eve.

But for Adam there was not found a helper who might be to him a suitable and intelligent companion, gifted like himself with reason, and with whom he might converse. Then God cast him into a deep sleep, and, while he was asleep, took out one of his ribs and filled up the place with flesh. This rib God formed into a woman and brought her to Adam. No sooner did Adam see her than he exclaimed: "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called *woman*, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." Adam called the name of his wife *Eve*, which signifies *the mother of all the living*.

Marriage.

Thus, in the garden of Paradise, God instituted the *ordinance of marriage*, which was afterwards raised by Jesus Christ Himself to the dignity of a sacrament, and honoured by His presence and first miracle at Cana of Galilee. St. Paul, referring to this passage, discloses to us that the indissolubility of marriage expressed herein is a type of Christ's mystical union with His Church for ever (Eph. v. 24).

CHAPTER II

THE FALL OF MAN AND THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR

The Devil.

THE Devil or the *accuser*, who, from his exalted position among the angels, had for his pride been cast down from heaven into the lowest depths of hell, seeing the happiness of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and contrasting their condition with his own unhappy lot, resolved, if possible, to rob them both of their innocence and of their friendship with God, and at the same time to reduce them to a state of degradation and misery. He whose proud title in heaven had been Lucifer, or the *Light-Bearer*, was filled with envy and malice at seeing these two creatures, whose humble origin was from the slime of the earth, living happily in their obedience to the commands of God, while he was condemned to suffer pain and hopeless remorse for all eternity.

Eve tempted.

He therefore assumed the form of a serpent, the most crafty and wily of all animals, and thus addressed Eve: "Why hath God commanded that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise?" She replied: "Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we do eat; but of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge which is in the midst of Paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die." The serpent said to her: "No, you shall not die. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Eve

The Fall.

listened to the deceitful words of the Devil, and seeing that the fruit was fair to the eyes, she first gazed on it with desire, then took thereof, and ate,

and gave to her husband, who also ate. Thus did sin come into the world.

Effects of the Fall.

No sooner had Adam and Eve eaten of the forbidden fruit than they began to be overwhelmed with shame, and girded themselves with fig-leaves which they sewed together. Their eyes indeed were opened, not to any more perfect knowledge of *good*, but only to the unhappy experience of having lost the *good* of original grace and innocence, and of having incurred the dreadful *evil* of sin. Oh, the change! What before had been their greatest joy now filled them with alarm and terror. Hearing the voice of God in the garden, they trembled with fear, and, to hide their shame, concealed themselves among the trees.

God called Adam and said to him: "Where art thou?" Adam replied: "I heard Thy voice in Paradise, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." Then God said: "Who told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" Adam replied: "The woman, whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat." God said to Eve: "Why hast thou done this?" She answered: "The serpent deceived me and I ate."

God's sentence on the serpent.

To the serpent God said: "Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all the beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

On Eve.

To Eve He said: "I will multiply thy sorrows: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."

On Adam.

To Adam He said: "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken, for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." This curse, therefore, imposes on all men the command to work, each in his own sphere: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," says St. Paul (2 Thess. iii. 10).

Expulsion from Paradise.

After this, God clothed Adam and Eve in garments of skins and drove them out of Paradise. He then placed at the entrance an angel with a fiery sword, lest they should return and eat of the fruit of the other tree that grew in the midst of Paradise, the Tree of Life, and live for ever.

Thus driven forth, our first parents sorrowfully left behind them that beautiful abode of peace, that garden of delights in which they had known God so intimately. Now did they quit for ever that Paradise of joy, and go out into a strange land to grieve over their misery, and to bewail their folly in having listened to the temptation of their wicked enemy. How great must have been their grief to see themselves so miserably fallen from what they had been.

Yet Almighty God had not left them without a gleam of hope which greatly lightened the burden of their punishment. Had He not already given them one assurance which comforted them in all their miseries? Had He not said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head?"

First promise of a Redeemer.

In these words we have the *first promise* of a Redeemer to come: for it was by her seed, Jesus Christ, that the woman was to crush the serpent's head.

CHAPTER III

CAIN AND ABEL—SETH AND HIS DESCENDANTS

In course of time Adam and Eve had two sons—Cain, who became a husbandman or a tiller of the ground, and Abel, who chose the tranquil life of a shepherd. The two brothers were very unlike in character, Cain being of a jealous temper and naturally rough and violent, while Abel was meek and gentle, and took a delight in tending his flocks.

The characters of Cain and Abel.

Both offered sacrifice to God, Cain of the fruits of the earth, Abel of the firstlings of his flock; but owing to the different dispositions in which they made their offerings, the sacrifices of Abel were accepted by God, while those of Cain were rejected. This roused Cain's jealousy; and he was so filled with grief and anger at seeing the preference given to Abel that at length he grew dejected, and began to entertain a violent hatred against his brother. Almighty God, seeing the evil passions of his heart, said to him: "Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive reward? but if ill, shall not sin, like a wild beast, lie in wait ready to devour thee? The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it."*

Their offerings.

But Cain turned a deaf ear to the warning of God, and allowing his hatred to get complete mastery over him, invited Abel to walk with him into the fields, when he fell upon him and slew him.

Cain kills his brother.

When the All-seeing God asked him what had become of his brother, he boldly replied: "I know not: am I

* These words afford us the strongest proof of man's free-will, expressing as they do the idea that Cain has power to suppress and subdue the evil inclinations which are aroused within him, and that temptations are not so strong that they cannot be overcome.

my brother's keeper?" But God said to him: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me from the earth. Now, therefore, cursed shalt thou be upon the earth which hath received the blood of thy brother at thy hand. When thou shalt till it, it shall not yield to thee its fruit: a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth." Despairing of forgiveness, Cain exclaimed: "My iniquity is too great to deserve pardon: everyone, therefore, that findeth me shall kill me." God said to him: "No, it shall not be so; but whosoever shall kill Cain shall be punished sevenfold." God then set a mark upon him, that whosoever found him should not kill him; whereupon Cain went forth a fugitive, and dwelt on the east side of Eden.

Cain's punishment.

Abel's violent death at the hands of his brother was a figure of that of Jesus Christ, who for a like cause was Himself put to death by His own people. Cain, for his crime, became separated from the Church as it then existed, and the Jews, for their crime in putting to death our Saviour, were also cut off and no longer remained God's chosen people. Like Cain, the Jews also became wanderers on the face of the earth.

Christ's death prefigured.

The descendants of Cain are mentioned to the sixth generation. They were *Henoch*, *Irad*, *Maviael*, *Mathusael*, and *Lamech*. Lamech was the first to introduce polygamy by marrying two wives, *Ada* and *Sella*; but his is the only example mentioned in Scripture among those who lived before the Deluge. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and some others after that event, when the age of man was shortened and the number of the true servants of God was small, were specially dispensed by God. He tolerated the custom among the Jews of having many

Posterity of Cain.

Polygamy.

wives at the same time, till our Saviour brought things back to the ancient standard by restoring marriage to its original institution, as we find recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew (xix. 4, 5).

There is a Hebrew tradition that Lamech, while hunting, slew Cain, having mistaken him for a wild beast, and that, on discovering what he had done, he beat so unmercifully the youth by whom he had been led into the mistake that the latter died from his blows.

Lamech had three sons—*Jabel*, who was the father of such as dwell in tents and of herdsmen; *Jubal*, who was the father of those that play upon the harp and the organ; and *Tubalcain*, who was a hammerer and artificer in every work of brass and iron.

Seth and his posterity.

Of the many sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, only one other is mentioned by name. It was to console our first parents for the loss of Abel that God gave them another son, Seth, whose descendants, for their religion and piety, are styled in Scripture the *sons of God*; whereas the ungodly race of Cain, on account of their wickedness, are spoken of as the *children of men*.

Patriarchs before the Deluge.

The genealogy of the patriarchs who lived before the Deluge is given here for reference:

1. Adam	lived	930 years;	died B.C.	3074
2. Seth	„	912 „	„	2962
3. Enos	„	905 „	„	2864
4. Cainan	„	910 „	„	2769
5. Malaleel	„	895 „	„	2714
6. Jared	„	962 „	„	2582
7. Henoch	„	365 years, and was seen no more, because God took him.	B.C.	3017

8. Mathusala	lived	969	years;	died	B.C. 2348
9. Lamech	„	777	„	„	2353
10. Noe	„	950	„	„	1998
			The Deluge		B.C. 2348

Henoch and Elias.

We read that God took *Henoch* and translated him to the unseen world without his undergoing death—a distinction shared by *Elias* alone of all the rest of the human race. It is believed that they will return again to this world in the days of Antichrist to bear witness to our Lord, and for this will be put to death.

Enos.

In speaking of *Enos*, the son of Seth, Holy Scripture says: "To Seth was born a son, whom he called Enos: this man began to call on the name of the Lord." It is not meant by this that God's name had not been invoked before the birth of Enos, but that Enos introduced greater solemnity in the worship of God. Religion was not a human invention, but many ceremonies have been adopted at different times to make an impression on the minds of the people. Before Enos, the heads of families officiated in their own houses; now, perhaps, they met together in places consecrated to the Divine service, and hymned forth the praises of the Most High.

CHAPTER IV

THE WICKEDNESS OF MEN—THE DELUGE. B.C. 2348

The world before the Flood.

At length it came to pass that the descendants of Seth began to marry with the women of the race of Cain; and in time the world became so corrupt, and plunged into such a depth of wickedness that, in the words of the Sacred Text, God,

being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, repented of having made man upon the earth. He said: "I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; from man even to beasts; from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air." Now, as God is unchangeable, and is not capable of repentance, grief, or any other passion, these expressions are used to designate the enormity of the sins of men which determined their Creator to destroy these His creatures, whom before He had so much favoured.

Noe and his family.

Yet there was found one man, Noe, the son of Lamech, who, in the midst of a corrupt generation, pleased God by leading a life of the most perfect justice. To him, as well as to his wife and his three sons, Sem, Cham, and Japheth, and their wives, the Lord showed mercy, being unwilling to punish the innocent with the guilty.

It was to this just man, whose name signifies *rest* or *comfort*, that God made known His resolution to destroy the world by a deluge; and wishing to save him and his family from the general destruction, He commanded him to build an *ark* or vessel, "which might contain his own family and such a number of animals of every species as might replenish the earth after the Deluge."

The ark.

God then gave minute instructions to Noe as to the size and shape of the ark: "Make thee an ark of timber planks: thou shalt make little rooms in the ark, and thou shalt pitch it within and without. The length of the ark shall be 300 cubits,* its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Thou shalt make a window in the ark, and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side: with lower, middle chambers, and third stories shalt thou make it. And I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shalt enter into the ark,

* 1 cubit = 1½ feet.

thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and the wives of thy sons with thee. And of every living creature of all flesh thou shalt bring two of a sort into the ark, that they may live with thee: of the male sex and the female. Of all clean beasts (*i.e.*, *fit for sacrifice*), and of the fowls of the air, take seven and seven, male and female: of beasts that are unclean two and two, the male and the female. Thou shalt take of all food that may be eaten, and thou shalt lay it up, and it shall be food for thee and for them."

The wicked remain obstinate.

The building of the ark took Noe 120 years, during which time he in vain preached repentance to his fellow-men, and warned them again and again of the terrible destruction pronounced against them. His warnings, however, were disregarded; men set his counsels at naught, and only scoffed when they saw the preparations he was making. Yet how bitterly must they have bewailed their folly when it was too late; for the time was at hand when God's threats against them were to be put into effect.

The Deluge.

The ark being finished, and the time fixed by Almighty God for purifying the earth being now come, on the *tenth day* of the *second month* of the *six hundredth year* of Noe's life, he and his family entered into the ark, taking with them all kinds of birds, beasts, and reptiles, by pairs and by sevens, as God had commanded. They took seven days to enter the ark, and then God fastened close the door on the outside.

After the seven days were passed, on the *seventeenth day* of the same month the waters of the flood overflowed the earth, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood-gates of heaven were opened. The rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and the waters increasing lifted up the ark on high from the earth. They overflowed exceedingly, and the ark was borne upon the waters. All the high mountains under heaven were

covered, and the water was fifteen cubits higher than their highest peaks. All flesh was destroyed that moved upon the earth, of fowl and of cattle, of beasts and of all creeping things, and all mankind All things on the earth wherein there was the breath of life died. Noe alone remained, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

The ark was regarded by the Fathers as a figure of the Church of God, in which alone is salvation to be found. This is the safe refuge to which all must have recourse who desire to be saved. Whatever storm assail her, she, like the ark, rises majestically, safeguarding all who seek shelter within her. The ark, moreover, was only *one*, though God could have ordered many smaller vessels to be made ready, that we might reflect that out of the one Church the obstinate will surely perish. In this ark *all* that were truly holy, and some that were imperfect, like Cham, were contained. As the clean beasts and the unclean dwelt together, we need not wonder if some Catholics, resembling the latter, are a disgrace to their name. The ark had different partitions to remind us of the various *orders* of clergy and laity in the Church, with its one chief governor like Noe in the ark. It was strong and visible, and rode triumphant amid the storms, the envy of all who were shut out from it. And when at last it came to rest upon the rock of Mount Ararat, it was again a figure of the Church built upon a *rock*, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

The ark a figure of God's Church.

CHAPTER V

NOE LEAVES THE ARK—GOD'S COVENANT—CHAM CURSED

MEANWHILE God remembered Noe and all that were with him in the ark. After 150 days the water began to subside, until, on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month of the six hundredth year of Noe's life, the ark rested upon the top of Mount *Ararat* in Armenia; and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared. Noe still waited forty days before he opened the window of the ark, and then he sent forth a raven, which returned no more to him. He next sent out a dove, but she, not finding where her foot might rest, returned to him in the ark. After seven days he again sent forth the dove, and she returned in the evening with a green olive branch in her beak, which was a sign that not only were the waters abating, but that even the lower trees were now uncovered. After waiting still another seven days, he once more sent her forth; but finding that she did not return, he understood that the waters had finally receded. Noe, however, did not yet leave the ark.

The waters subside.

At length, on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the six hundred and first year of his life, the earth being now dry, Noe, by the command of God, went out of the ark with his family and all the living creatures that were with him, after having been shut up for *a year and ten days*.

Noe leaves the ark.

To show his gratitude to God for his preservation, he had no sooner left the ark than he erected an altar, and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, he offered sacrifice. This act of piety was

Noe's sacrifice.

so pleasing to Almighty God that He promised never again to curse the earth on account of the sins of men. He then blessed Noe and his sons, and bade them increase and multiply, and fill the earth. He also gave them power over all living creatures, with permission to use their flesh as food, but forbade the eating of flesh with the blood. On this occasion also God enacted a new law against murder, in which He gave to judges the power to punish murderers with death: "Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed: for man was made to the image of God."

God's Covenant with Noe.

God, moreover, made with Noe a *Covenant*, or solemn agreement, in which He renewed His promise never again to destroy the world by a flood—a promise which He ratified by the sign of the rainbow in the clouds, saying: "This is the sign of the covenant which I give between Me and you. I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between Me and between the earth. And when My bow shall appear in the clouds, I will remember My covenant with you, and there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh."

Cham's impiety.

Soon after Noe had left the ark, he began to till the ground, and planted a vineyard. When the time of the vintage came he gathered and pressed the grapes, and being ignorant, no doubt, of the effects of new wine, drank too freely of the juice. He thus became intoxicated, and in this condition fell asleep, lying uncovered in the middle of his tent. His son Cham, the father of Chanaan, was the first to discover him thus, and in ridicule went and told his brothers; but they, with more filial feeling, averted their eyes and covered their father with a cloak.

When Noe awoke and discovered what had happened, he condemned the conduct of Cham, and pronounced a

curse upon him in the person of his son Chanaan, but on Sem and Japheth he called down a blessing for their piety. The words uttered by Noe on this occasion to his sons were truly prophetical, and have been most strikingly fulfilled in their posterity. "Cursed," he said, "be Chanaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." To Sem he said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Sem, be Chanaan his servant." And to Japheth: "May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Sem, and Chanaan be his servant."

The blessing of Sem and Japheth.

The curse pronounced against Chanaan, the son of Cham, began to be literally carried out when, under Josue, the children of Israel, who were the descendants of Sem, took possession of the land of Chanaan—the land which subsequently bore the name of Palestine. At that time great numbers of the Chanaanites perished, God having permitted the scourge to fall upon them on account of their evil ways. To Noe were revealed the calamities that were to overtake Cham's offspring, and in this way was Cham severely punished by this foreknowledge of his children's misery.

Cham's curse.

The descendants of Japheth (*enlargement*) occupied the northern coast of Asia Minor and Armenia. Thence they spread south-east through Southern Asia, north-west over Greece to the Adriatic, along the coast lands north of the Mediterranean Sea, and over all Europe.

The descendants of Japheth.

The descendants of Cham (*heat*) spread over the north of Africa, through Egypt and Ethiopia. They also occupied the south of Arabia, and the districts lying to the north of the Red Sea, as well as the south of Palestine.

The descendants of Cham.

The descendants of Sem (*the name*) occupied the

country to the south of Asia Minor, as well as Syria Mesopotamia, the greater part of Arabia and the districts lying between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea.

The descendants of Sem.

Noe died at the age of 950, having lived 350 years after the Deluge. He was thus for some years contemporary with Enos, the son of Seth and did not die till Thare, the father of Abraham, was 128 years old. From this we see by how few steps the traditions of the early history of the world may have been handed down from the days of Adam to those of Abraham and thus through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on to the days of Moses, by whom the *first five books* of the Old Testament were written.

Noe's death.

There is a tradition among the Jews that God gave to Noe some general laws to be observed by all who wished to be saved:

The seven precepts.

"1. To obey the laws.

"2. Not to curse God.

"3. Not to admit of any false god, nor of any superstition.

"4. Not to commit adultery, nor incest, nor any sins against nature.

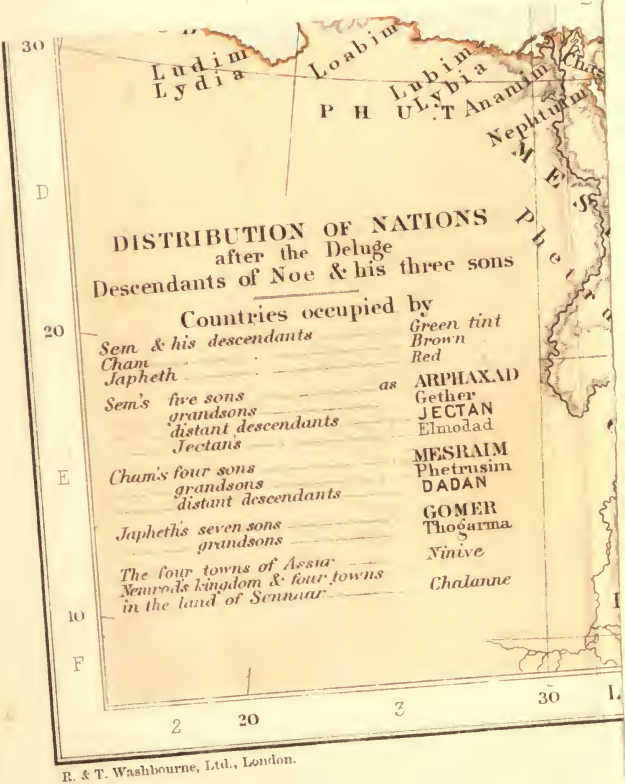
"5. Not to be guilty of murder.

"6. Not to steal, nor to break one's word.

"7. Not to eat the limb of a living creature."

In the first stages of society, government was *patriarchal*. The Patriarch (*father-ruler*) stood in relation to his children and his children's children as *king* and as *priest*. It was he who offered sacrifice, as we have seen in the case of Noe.

The patriarch.



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CHAPTER VI

THE TOWER OF BABEL AND THE DISPERSION OF MANKIND, B.C. 2233

Before the dispersion.

In the days of Phaleg, who was fifth in descent from Noe, mankind had increased to such an extent that it was necessary for them to separate, and to seek new settlements in different parts of the globe. At first they inhabited the high table-lands of Armenia, that lie between the Black and the Caspian Seas; but at length, compelled to journey southward in quest of food for themselves and their cattle, they came to a rich plain intersected by the Tigris and the Euphrates, in the land of Sennaar, probably Babylonia, and there they dwelt.

The city and tower of Babel.

While still in the land of Sennaar, they proposed to make a city and a huge *Tower* whose top might reach to heaven, and which would serve not only as a monument to render their name famous in after ages, but also as a place of security in which they might defy even God Himself.* Accordingly they set about their work with great zeal, using bricks in place of stone, and slime or bitumen in place of mortar. But their pride raised the just indignation of God, who made use of their very folly to carry out His design of dispersing them abroad that they might replenish the whole earth.

* That they wished to defy the power and dominion of God seems certain; but the idea of their building such a tower as would secure them against another deluge cannot be entertained, especially in view of God's promise never again to destroy mankind by a flood. It would not be intended even as a means of preventing their dispersion, since they must have seen that it was impossible for them to live in one place at the rate in which the human race was increasing: "Let us make our names famous *before we be scattered abroad into all lands*" (Gen. xi. 4).

Until this time all men had spoken the same language. When, however, they had carried their edifice to a considerable height, Almighty God defeated their intention by suddenly *confounding their speech*, so that, to their utter astonishment, they found that they could no longer understand each other. So great was the confusion which followed, that they were compelled to desist from their vain project, and the city which they had begun received the name of *Babel* or *Confusion*, whence also we have the name *Babylon*. This event took place about a century after the Deluge.

The confusion of tongues.

In the confounding of tongues at Babel, we have one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Old Testament. Men forgot in a moment the language which they had hitherto spoken, and found themselves enabled to speak another known only to a few of the same family. We are not told in what the confusion consisted, but we must not suppose that there were as many new languages or dialects as there were men at Babel.

And now the various tribes and families, divided according to their respective tongues, must needs separate, and disperse to the regions allotted to them, thus laying the foundation of those societies or nations which gradually spread over the world.

The dispersion of mankind.

The following is a list of the different countries believed to have been occupied by the descendants of Noe's sons, which need not be committed to memory, but may serve as a useful reference.

Sem's five sons were *Elam*, *Assur*, *Arphaxad*, *Lud*, and *Aram*.

Sem's descendants.

1. *Elam's* descendants occupied *Persia*.
2. *Assur's* „ „ *Assyria* (part of).

3. *Arphaxad's* descendants occupied *Chaldæa.*

Arphaxad was the grandfather of *Heber*, the progenitor of the *Hebrews.*

4. *Lud's* descendants occupied *Asia Minor.*

Lud was the progenitor of the *Lydians.*

5. *Aram's* descendants occupied *Syria* and *Mesopotamia.*

Japheth's seven sons were *Gomer*, *Magog*, *Madai*, *Javan*, *Thubal*, *Mosoch*, and *Thiras.*

Japheth's descendants.

1. *Gomer's* descendants were the *Cimbri.*
2. *Magog's* „ „ *Scythians.*
3. *Madai's* „ „ *Medes.*
4. *Javan's* „ „ *Ionians* and *Greeks.*
5. *Thubal's* „ „ *Tibareni* (S.E. of the Black Sea).
6. *Mosoch's* „ „ *Moschi* (E. of the Black Sea).
7. *Thiras's* „ „ *Thracians.*

Cham's four sons were *Chus*, *Mesraim*, *Phuth*, and *Chanaan.*

Cham's descendants.

1. *Chus's* descendants occupied *Babylonia* and *Ethiopia.*
2. *Mesraim's* „ „ *Egypt.*
3. *Phuth's* „ „ *Lybia.*
4. *Chanaan's* „ „ *The land of Chanaan.*

Nemrod.

Nemrod, son of Chus, and grandson of Cham, was a man of gigantic stature, and famous as a mighty hunter. He also became a conqueror of men and, on the plains of Sennaar, established a great empire, the capital of which was *Babylon.* He is even said to have pushed his conquests into Assyria, where he built *Ninive* on the banks of the Tigris.

THE PATRIARCHS FROM THE DELUGE TO MOSES.

1.	*Sem*	lived	600	years;	died B.C.	1846
2.	*Arphaxad*	„	338	„	„	2008
3.	*Sale*	„	433	„	„	1878
4.	*Heber*	„	464	„	„	1817
5.	*Phaleg*	„	239	„	„	2008
6.	*Reu*	„	239	„	„	1978
7.	*Sarug*	„	230	„	„	1955
8.	*Nachor*	„	148	„	„	2007
9.	*Thare*	„	205	„	„	1921
10.	*Abraham*	„	175	„	„	1821
11.	*Isaac*	„	180	„	„	1716
12.	*Jacob*	„	147	„	„	1689
13.	*Levi*	„	137	„	„	1612
14.	*Moses*	„	120	„	„	1451

PART II

FROM THE CALL OF ABRAHAM TO THE DELIVERY OF THE HEBREWS FROM THE EGYPTIAN BONDAGE

B.C. 1921 TO B.C. 1491

CHAPTER VII

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM, B.C. 1921

God chooses a family.

WITH the call of Abraham began a new dispensation. Even before the death of Noe we find men relapsing into idolatry, forgetful of their Maker, and giving themselves up to all kinds of wickedness, while the true religion remained only with a few of the descendants of Sem. The time had now come when Almighty God, who, in His Covenant with Noe, had promised never again to destroy the world on account of the sins of men, resolved to make choice of a *Family* which was to preserve the knowledge and the worship of the true God, and from which the promised Redeemer was to spring. At the same time faith in this more specific Promise was at once typified and guarded by the *Covenant of Circumcision.*

The family of Thare.

The man on whom God fixed his choice was *Abraham* or, as he was at first called, *Abram*, son of Thare, and tenth in lineal descent from Noe. This extraordinary man was born B.C. 1996, or two years after Noe's death. Thare, who lived in Ur, a city of the Chaldees, in *Mesopotamia*, had three sons, *Abram*, *Nachor*, and *Aran* who was the father of Lot. From Ur, the chosen family went into the land of Chanaan, and finally settled in Haran, where Thare died at the age of 205 years.

Abram's first call.

While Abram was yet in Ur, the Lord had appeared to him and said: "Go forth out of thy country, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee. I will make of thee a great nation: I will bless thee, and magnify thy name. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." In the concluding words of Almighty God to Abram, we have the promise of the *Messias*, and of the *call of the Gentiles* to the true faith: "*In Thee*"—that is, in the Messias, who will be one of thy descendants—"shall *all the nations* of the earth be blessed."

Abram's second call.

At the age of 75, Abram, in obedience to the Divine command, left Haran, and crossing the Euphrates went into the land of Chanaan, taking with him his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. Having pitched his tents in the neighbourhood of Sichem, between the mountains Hebal and Garizim, he built *an altar* to the Lord. Here God again appeared to him, and made him a second promise, saying: "To thy seed will I give this land." From Sichem he removed to the country east of Bethel, and between Bethel and Hai he erected *a second altar* to the Lord. He then continued his journey southwards; but, owing to a severe famine, was soon compelled to leave the promised land, and for a time went down into Egypt.

Abram in Egypt

As he drew near to the land of the Pharaos, he began to fear that the beauty of Sarai might expose both him and her to danger, and that the Egyptians, to possess his wife, might put him to death. He accordingly persuaded her to say that she was his sister. This she did without violating the truth, because, being the daughter of his brother Aran, she was

his niece; and being thus nearly related, she might, in the style of the Hebrews, be truly called his sister, as Lot, his nephew, is spoken of as Abram's brother. What he had foreseen came indeed to pass. No sooner did the Egyptians see Sarai than, being struck with her beauty, they described her to Pharao, who at once sent for her and took her to his palace with the intention of making her his wife, while at the same time he loaded Abram with presents. God, however, interposed in a wonderful manner. Warned by plagues sent upon him and his household, he was made to understand the wrong he had done, and that the woman whom he had brought into his palace was in reality the wife of Abram. He at once sent for Abram; and complaining of the deception practised upon him, restored Sarai to him, bidding him take her and go his way.

Abram and Lot separate.

Abram therefore left Egypt, and journeying back through the south of Palestine, came again into the country which he had left the previous year, and once more took up his abode between Bethel and Hai. Here a dispute arose between the herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot. Lot had accompanied him in all his wanderings; but now, owing to the great increase in their flocks and herds, the place in which they dwelt did not afford sufficient pasturage, and it became necessary for them to part. Fearing that the disagreements among their servants might spread, Abram said to Lot: "Let there be no quarrel, I beseech thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we are brethren. Behold the whole land is before thee. Depart from me, I pray thee. If thou wilt go to the left hand, I will go to the right; if thou choose the right hand, I will pass to the left."

Looking around, Lot saw all the land about the

Jordan watered throughout "as the paradise of the Lord," and like the land of Egypt which they had so recently left. The prospect was most pleasing; and, though the wickedness of the inhabitants was very great, he left his uncle in the land of Chanaan, and journeying to the south-east, settled in the town of Sodom.

Lot settles in Sodom.

After the departure of Lot, Almighty God again renewed His promise to Abram, saying: "Lift up thy eyes, and look from the place wherein thou now art, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. All the land which thou seest, I will give to thee and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: if any man be able to number the dust of the earth, he shall be able to number thy seed also." Then, once more removing his tent, Abram went southward, and dwelt in the *vale of Mambre*, near Hebron, where he built *a third altar* to the Lord.

Abram removes to Mambre.

CHAPTER VIII

LOT RESCUED—MELCHISEDECH'S SACRIFICE—THE BIRTH OF ISMAEL, B.C. 1910

At the time of Lot's separation from Abram, there stood in the valley of the Lower Jordan five cities, *Sodom*, *Gomorrha*, *Adama*, *Seboin*, and *Bala*. Their kings had for twelve years been subject to Chodorlahomor, the powerful king of the Elamites: but now they determined to throw off his yoke, and revolted. Chodorlahomor, bent on reducing them to subjection, marched against them, accompanied by three allied kings, and after conquering the nations to the east and to the south, the four kings were met by those of the

The battle of the kings.

five cities, in the woodland vale which now is the Salt Sea (*Dead Sea*). It chanced that in the vale were many pits of bitumen, among which the forces of the cities became entangled, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrha were utterly defeated, while those of their followers who escaped slaughter fled to the mountains. The victorious kings then marched on Sodom and Gomorrha, which they took and plundered, carrying off Lot and all the inhabitants prisoners.

Abram rescues Lot.

News of this disaster had no sooner been brought to Abram by one who had escaped from the field of battle than he armed his servants to the number of 318, and with his Amorrhite allies sallied forth from Mambre, and went in pursuit of the victorious kings. He overtook them near Lais, a city which afterwards received the name of Dan. Here he divided his company; then, while it was yet night, he exhorted his men, and suddenly fell upon the unsuspecting foe, whom he defeated and pursued as far as Hoba, in the neighbourhood of Damascus. Not only was Lot rescued, together with all the other prisoners who had been carried off from Sodom, but all the booty which had been taken was recovered.

Melchisedech's sacrifice.

It was on this memorable occasion that Abram was met by Melchisedech, king of Salem, a city which is supposed to have occupied the spot on which Jerusalem was afterwards built. This Melchisedech was a king of the Chanaanites who had maintained the worship of the true God, and, as was not unusual in those days, combined the sacerdotal with the royal dignity; for, as we read in the Sacred Text, the king of Salem, being the priest of the Most High, brought forth *bread and wine* and blessed Abram, and blessed the Most High God by whose protection the enemies were in his hands. In return Abram gave him tithes of all the spoil.

Melchisedech was a priest of an order different from that of Aaron, inasmuch as he offered in sacrifice *bread and wine*, a figure of Christ's sacrifice in the Holy Mass. As St. Jerome says: "Melchisedech offered not bloody victims, but dedicated the sacrament of Christ in bread and wine . . . a pure sacrifice." If, then, *Christ* be *a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech*, whose sacrifice was not bloody, as those of Aaron were, what other sacrifice does He now offer but that of His own body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, through the ministry of His priests?

The type of the sacrifice of the Mass.

We observe also that Melchisedech received tithes from Abram, a fact which shows the very ancient practice of supporting God's priests by tithes. But when the time came to distribute the spoil, Abram refused to accept any part of it for himself, although earnestly pressed to do so by the king of Sodom,* who had gone out to meet him in the vale of Save, or the King's Vale.

The offering of tithes.

Soon after Abram's return from rescuing Lot, the Lord appeared to him in a vision for the fourth time and said: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great." Abram answered: "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me? I shall go without children, and lo my servant born in my house shall be my heir." Upon this, Almighty God not only expressly told him that he should have a son, but bidding him look up to heaven and number the stars if he could, promised that his seed should be as numerous, and that they should possess the land on which he stood. Abram believed God's word, and, as St. Paul says, "in the promise of God he staggered not by distrust, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. iv. 20). When Abram

Abram's faith.

* Either the king of Sodom had not been killed in the recent battle, or this may have been the new king.

wished to know by what signs he should be declared the lawful owner of the Promised Land, he was directed to take a cow, a she-goat, and a ram, each three years old, together with a turtle dove and a young pigeon. All these he was to divide, except the birds, and to lay the parts over against each other. He then watched them all day, and drove away the birds that were ready to descend upon them.

The Covenant made with him.

At sunset he fell into a deep sleep, while at the same time a great and darksome horror seized upon him, and a voice was heard saying: "Know thou beforehand that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land not their own, and they shall bring them under bondage, and afflict them *four hundred years.* But I will judge the nation which they shall serve, and after this they shall come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and be buried in a good old age. *But in the fourth generation they shall return hither;* for as yet the iniquities of the Amorrhites are not at the full." When the sun was set, a dark mist arose, and there appeared a smoking furnace and a lamp of fire passing between the divided victims. Then God made a Covenant with Abram, saying: "To thy seed will I give this land, from the river of Egypt even to the great river Euphrates."

The prediction mentioned above, that the seed of Abram should remain in bondage 400 years, had reference to the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt, and their subsequent liberation under Moses: "And the abode of the children of Israel that they made in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years" (Exod. xii. 40).

Agar the Egyptian.

At the time of Abram's return from Egypt, he brought with him, as handmaid to Sarai, a young Egyptian woman named Agar; and as the former was now growing old and as yet was childless, she begged her husband to take Agar as his second

wife. Abram yielded to his wife's petition, knowing that in doing so he was not acting contrary to the Divine will, and without for a moment doubting God's word; for his faith was too firmly grounded to allow of any distrust in the promised blessing. The event, however, did not increase the happiness of Sarai; for no sooner did Agar find herself thus honoured by Abram than she began to despise her mistress, and by her insolence provoked the jealousy of Sarai to such a degree that the latter complained to her husband, and besought him to restrain the overbearing conduct of her servant. Abram said to her: "Behold thy handmaid is in thy own hand: use her as it pleaseth thee."

Agar's flight.

Upon this, Sarai's treatment of Agar became so severe that the life of the latter was rendered bitter in the extreme, and she was at length compelled to flee into the desert, where, afflicted with grief, she sat by the fountain which is on the way to Sur. Here an angel appeared to her, and asked her whence she came and whither she was going. She answered: "I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress." The angel did not blame Sarai, but gave Agar to understand that the fault was wholly on her side. He bade her return to her mistress, and humble herself before her, while at the same time he added: "Behold thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Ismael (*God hath heard*), because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. He shall be a wild man: his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him." Having promised, moreover, that her descendants should be multiplied exceedingly, and that they should not be able to be counted for multitude, he disappeared from her sight.

Birth of Ismael.

Agar was filled with astonishment at this mysterious apparition; and after naming the fountain by which she had sat "*The well of Him that liveth and seeth me*," she went back to Abram's house. There

in course of time she gave birth to a son, whom, in obedience to the angel's command, she called *Ismael*. Abram was then 86 years old.

CHAPTER IX

THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION— DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRHA, B.C. 1897

The Covenant of circumcision.

When Abram was 99 years old, Almighty God again appeared to him, and, after renewing His former promises, said: "I am, and My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram (*exalted father*), but thou shalt be called *Abraham* (i.e., *father of a multitude*), because I have made thee a father of many nations. Thou shalt keep My Covenant, and thy seed after thee. This is My *Covenant* which you shall observe: *All the male-kind of you shall be circumcised.*" God thus instituted the rite of *Circumcision* as a sign of the Covenant between Him and the posterity of Abraham, and the acceptance of this rite now became the condition of the Covenant on the part of those with whom God made it. Not only were all male children to be circumcised when *eight days old*, but the obligation extended to every male in his household, and even to the bought servant. The male who was not circumcised was to be destroyed out of God's people for having broken His Covenant. Without delay, Abraham carried out the command of God with regard to his own household, and on that day circumcised himself, as well as Ismael, now 13 years old, and all his male servants.

God also told Abraham that his wife, who had hitherto been called *Sarai*, a word meaning *my princess*, should now

be called *Sara*, or *princess*, not merely of one family, but of all the nations of the faithful. She, and no other, was to be the mother of the promised child, who should be blest, and from whom should spring nations and kings of peoples. Her son, moreover, was to be called *Isaac*, a name signifying *laughter*, and therefore expressive of Abraham's feelings of joy and exultation on the announcement of such glad tidings.

Isaac's birth foretold.

Shortly afterwards, while Abraham was dwelling at Mambre, as he was one day sitting at the door of his tent during the heat of the day, he looked up and beheld three strangers coming towards him. As soon as he saw them, he rose up and advanced to meet them, and bowing down before them, begged that he might be allowed to wash their feet and to offer them refreshment. On their agreeing to accept of his hospitality, he hastened into the tent to Sara, and bade her make three cakes with all speed, while he himself ran to the herd and selected a very tender calf, which he gave to one of his servants to kill and dress. When the meal was ready, he seated his guests under a tree, while he stood by and waited on them.

Abraham visited by three angels.

After they had eaten, the visitors inquired for Sara, and being told that she was in her tent, one of them assured Abraham that, by the time they came that way again in the following year, she should have a son. Sara, who overheard what was said, laughed secretly behind the door of her tent, as though, on account of her advanced years, the promise were incredible; whereupon the angel, for such he was, rebuked her for her want of trust in God's almighty power, and asked her if anything was hard or impossible with Him. The three then arose and departed towards Sodom, being accompanied on their way by Abraham.

Their promise to him.

Abraham pleads for Sodom.

As they went along, the angels spoke to Abraham of the blessings which, through him, were to flow upon all the nations of the earth. At the same time one of them told him that the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrha had become so great that they were on their way to execute God's judgment by destroying the guilty cities whose sins cried aloud to heaven for vengeance. On hearing this, Abraham's sympathies were at once aroused; and turning to the angel, he began to entreat in the most earnest manner that at least they would not destroy the innocent with the guilty: "If there be *fifty* just men in the city," said he, "shall they perish also, and wilt thou not spare that place for the sake of the fifty just, if they be found therein?" The angel answered: "If I find fifty just men, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Whereupon Abraham rejoined: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes. What if there be five less than fifty? wilt thou for *five and forty* destroy the whole city?" The angel replied: "I will not destroy it if I find five and forty." Again Abraham pleaded: "But if *forty* be found there, what wilt thou do?" He said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of forty." "Lord," said Abraham, "be not angry, I beseech thee, if I speak: What if *thirty* shall be found there?" He answered: "I will not do it if I find thirty." "Seeing," continued Abraham, "I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord. What if *twenty* be found?" He replied: "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." "I beseech thee," said Abraham, "be not angry, Lord, if I speak yet once more: What if *ten* shall be found there?" "Even so," he answered, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." Abraham then took leave of the angel and returned home, the other two having proceeded on their way to Sodom.

When the two angels reached Sodom in the evening,

they found Lot sitting at the gate of the city. He at once rose up to salute them, and pressed them to remain with him that night, saying: "I beseech you, my lords, turn into the house of your servant and lodge there; and in the morning you shall go on your way." At first they seemed unwilling to accede to his request; but having at length prevailed upon them to come into his house, he prepared a feast and entertained them with great hospitality.

Lot entertains the angels.

But before Lot and his guests retired for the night, the house was beset by a band of lawless townsmen, who loudly clamoured for the young men to be delivered up to them. Grieved at the insult thus offered to the two strangers, who he thought would be safe under his roof, Lot went out to the Sodomites, and tried by every entreaty to dissuade them from their evil purpose. But the more he argued with them, the more violent did they become. They told him to remember that he himself was but a stranger in their midst, and declared that if he did not consent to their demands, they would treat him with more violence than those whom he was trying to shelter from them. They then began to press forward, and were on the point of forcing their way into the house, when the angels, stretching out their hands, drew in Lot, and secured the door against the mob. At the same instant they struck with blindness all that were without the house, so that they could not find the door.

The violence of the Sodomites.

In the morning the angels commanded Lot to gather together every member of his family and flee from the city, which they were about to destroy on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. Lot at once warned his two intended sons-in-law of the destruction that was so soon to befall the sinful city, and besought them to escape with him and his family while there was yet time. They,

however, not only disregarded his warning, but ridiculed his advice, and treated him as a dreamer.

Flight of Lot and his family.

At daybreak, the angels urged Lot to depart without further delay. "Arise," they said, "take thy wife and thy two daughters, lest thou also perish in the wickedness of the city." As he still lingered, and seemed unwilling to go, they took his hand, and the hand of his wife and of his two daughters, and led them out of the city. At the same time they cautioned them not to look back, but to flee with all possible speed to the neighbouring mountain, lest they too should be consumed. But Lot, afraid of flying thither, begged leave to be allowed to seek refuge in the town of Segor, which was not far distant. The angels granted his request, but urged him to make all haste, as they could not act till he was in a place of safety.

The sun had already risen when Lot arrived at Segor; and then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrha fire and brimstone from heaven, and utterly consumed them, as well as two smaller cities. The country around was also destroyed, together with all the inhabitants.

Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot's wife, forgetful of the angels' warning not to look back, turned her eyes in the direction of Sodom, and for her disobedience was at once changed into a pillar of salt. Lot, struck with terror when he saw what had happened to his wife, and fearing that he himself might not be safe even at Segor, fled with his two daughters to the mountain which the angels had at first pointed out, and there he dwelt in a cave.

In course of time his elder daughter became the mother of Moab, the ancestor of the Moabites, and the younger the mother of Ammon, from whom were descended the Ammonites.

CHAPTER X

ABRAHAM AND KING ABIMELECH—THE BIRTH OF ISAAC, B.C. 1896

After a long residence in the Vale of Mambre, and soon after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, Abraham moved southward and journeyed to Gerara, a town situated between Cades and Sur. It was at that time the chief seat of the Philistines. Here he and Sara were exposed to a danger similar to that which they had experienced during their sojourn in Egypt. Abraham had foreseen the danger, and again tried to avert it by calling Sara his sister; but the device he adopted ended with the like result as in the case of Pharao.

Abraham goes to Gerara.

When Abimelech, king of Gerara, saw Sara, he was so attracted by her beauty that he wished to marry her, being under the impression that she was indeed the sister of Abraham. Warned, however, by God of the real relationship that existed between them, he at once gave her back to her husband; and gently, yet earnestly, rebuking him for his deceit, asked: "What hast thou done to us? In what have we offended thee, that thou hast exposed me and my kingdom to the danger of a great sin?" Abraham answered that he thought within himself that perhaps there was not the fear of God among the people of Gerara, and that they might kill him for the sake of his wife. He also explained to Abimelech how he could, without transgressing the truth, call Sara his sister. The king, in restoring his wife to him, made him rich presents of sheep and oxen and servants; then turning to Sara he said: "Behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: this shall serve thee for a covering of thine eyes to all that are with thee, and whithersoever thou shalt go: and remember thou wast taken."

Sara's danger.

With the money, Abimelech no doubt wished to make satisfaction for his deed: he wished by this act of reparation that their eyes should be covered, *i.e.*, that they should forget the wrong he had done. In his concluding words he reminded Sara that she had been taken because of her deceit, and warned her not to forget the fact that she was the wife of Abraham.

Birth of Isaac.

The time was now at hand when God's promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled. Either at Gerara or Bersabee, Sara gave birth to a son, whom his father circumcised on the eighth day, and named *Isaac*, as God had commanded him. Abraham was at this time 100 years old.

At the great feast made to celebrate the weaning of Isaac, Ismael, the son of Agar, was seen to mock the child; whereupon Sara asked that he and his mother should be at once turned out of doors and sent away. Now Abraham dearly loved his son Ismael, and the request filled him with grief. To console him in his affliction, however, God appeared to him and said: "Let it not seem grievous to thee for the boy and for thy bond-woman: in all that Sara hath said to thee, hearken to her voice: for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. But I will make the son also of the bond-woman a great nation, because he is thy seed."

Agar and Ismael cast out.

Next morning, Abraham took bread and a bottle of water, and putting them upon Agar's shoulder, delivered the boy to her and sent her away. Thus forlorn, Agar wandered for a time in the wilderness of *Bersabee* till, the water in her bottle being spent, the young Ismael was on the point of dying of thirst. In despair, the grief-stricken mother placed her son under a tree and went a short distance away, unable to bear the sight of his sufferings. Here, seated as far from him as a bow can carry, she exclaimed in anguish: "I will not see my boy die"; and she wept bitterly.

Moved with compassion for her distress, and by the cries of Ismael, God sent an angel to console her; and suddenly she heard a voice which called her by name, saying: "What art thou doing, Agar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the boy. Arise, take him up and hold him by the hand, for I will make him a great nation." At the same time, "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, at which she filled her bottle, and gave the boy to drink."

When Ismael was grown up, he became an archer, and dwelt in the wilderness of Pharan near Mount Sinai. His mother took a wife for him out of the land of Egypt, and he became the father of twelve sons and of a daughter named *Maheleth*, who was afterwards married to Esau. His sons became great chieftains, and were the ancestors of those Arab tribes that to this day live a wild and wandering life in the desert. Thus we see how literally were fulfilled the words of the angel spoken to Agar before the birth of Ismael: "He shall be a wild man: his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him."

Isaac a type of the Church.

Ismael, the son of the bond-woman, was a figure of those who lived under the Jewish dispensation, while the Church is prefigured in Isaac, who was the child of promise. Moreover, in the expulsion of Agar and her son is foreshadowed the rejection of the Jews. St. Paul says: "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise. But what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. Therefore, brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free; by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians iv. 28-31).

A dispute having arisen between Abraham and king Abimelech regarding a well which belonged to the former, and which the servants of Abimelech had taken possession

of by force, a treaty was made between them which they ratified by an oath. Abraham said to the king: "Thou shalt take seven ewe-lambs at my hand that they may be a testimony for me that I dug this well." They then gave the place the name of *Bersabee*, or *the well of oath*. Having planted a grove in Bersabee, Abraham there erected an altar which he dedicated to the name of the Lord God Eternal, to testify that He alone was incapable of change. For a long time he was a sojourner in the land of the Philistines.

Bersabee, or the well of oath.

CHAPTER XI

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE, B.C. 1871— THE DEATH OF SARA AND THE MARRIAGE OF ISAAC

Before Abraham left Bersabee, the greatest trial of all befell him. Almighty God, to try his fidelity still further, appeared to him and said: "Abraham, Abraham." The holy patriarch answered: "Here I am." God then said to him: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision: there thou shalt offer him for a holocaust (i.e., *a whole burnt sacrifice*) upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." Abraham hesitated not. He rose up in the night and saddled his ass; and taking with him two young men and Isaac his son, together with wood for the holocaust, went his way to the place pointed out to him by Almighty God. It was not till the third day that he came in sight of the mountain on which he was to offer the sacrifice, and then only did he make known his intentions. To the two servants he said: "Stay you here with the ass: I and the boy will go with speed as far as yonder, and, after we have worshipped, will return

Abraham is commanded to sacrifice Isaac.

to you." Taking the wood intended for the sacrifice, he laid it upon Isaac, while he himself carried in his hands fire and a sword.

His obedience.

As they went on together, Isaac said to his father: "My father." Abraham answered: "What wilt thou, son?" "Behold," said he, "fire and a sword: where is the victim for the holocaust?" Abraham replied: "God will provide a victim for a holocaust, my son." Thus they proceeded on their journey till they came to the place which God had indicated. Here Abraham built an altar; and after arranging the wood in order, bound Isaac and laid him upon it. He then put forth his hand and took the sword to sacrifice his son. But now Almighty God interposed in a wonderful manner. Behold an angel of the Lord from heaven called to him, and said: "Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou any injury to him: now I know that thou fearest God, for whose sake thou hast not spared thy only begotten son." Lifting up his eyes, he saw a ram held fast by its horns amongst the briars, and this he took and offered for a holocaust instead of his son. He then named the place *the Lord seeth.* A second time the angel called to him and, as the reward of his obedience, declared: "Because thou hast done this thing, saith the Lord, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea-shore: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." Having rejoined the young men, Abraham returned with Isaac to Bersabee.

Isaac a figure of Jesus Christ.

Isaac was a striking figure of our Saviour offered for the sins of men. The mountain on which Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son was *Mount Moria*, on one part of which was afterwards built the Temple; while on another part, called

Calvary, our Saviour was crucified, after having carried His cross, as Isaac carried the wood on which he was to be sacrificed. How like our Saviour, too, was Isaac in his humble submission to his father's will, even unto death! Abraham first explained to his son the will of God, to which Isaac freely gave his consent; otherwise, being in the full vigour of his youth, he might easily have hindered his aged father, now 125 years old, from binding him. But in this willingness to die, as in so many other particulars, he was a noble figure of Jesus Christ, who was *offered because it was His will.*

Not many years after Isaac had been restored to his parents, Sara, at the age of 127 years, died at Arbee or Hebron, in the land of Chanaan, her loss being deeply mourned by Abraham. Wishing to secure a suitable spot which might serve as a sepulchre for all his family, he thus addressed himself to the children of Heth: "I am a stranger and sojourner among you: give me the right of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead." But they said to him: "My lord, hear us: thou art a prince of God among us; bury thy dead in our principal sepulchres, and no man shall have power to hinder thee."

Death of Sara.

Abraham, however, begged them to intercede for him with Ephron, the son of Seor, that he would give him the double cave which he had at the end of his field for as much money as it was worth, that it might serve him for a burying-place. When this request was made known to Ephron, he answered: "Let it not be so, my lord, but do thou rather hearken to what I say. The field I deliver to thee, and the cave that is therein, in the presence of the children of my people; bury thy dead." Abraham still persisted in his demand to know the value of the field, that he might pay for it and keep it as his own posses-

The double cave at Mambre.

sion. At length Ephron, with great reluctance, told him that it was worth 400 sicles* of silver; whereupon Abraham weighed out the money that Ephron had named—400 sicles of silver of common current money, and he buried Sara, his wife, in the double cave of the field that looked towards Mambre. Abraham was afterwards laid to rest in the same cave by his sons Isaac and Ismael. There also were buried Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Lia; and, after the departure of the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, probably the body of Joseph. The sepulchre is still in existence.

In the foregoing recital two interesting circumstances may be noted. For the first time in the history of the world we have mentioned the word *money*, in the transaction between Abraham and Ephron. In all probability money was not yet coined, and thus we find that Abraham *weighed out* the 400 sicles. The other fact worthy of notice is the mention of Sara's age. She is the only woman whose age the Scripture mentions, a distinction which she merited by her exalted dignity and faith.

Abraham's commission to Eliezer.

Now that Sara was dead, and Abraham was advanced in years, he became anxious for the marriage of Isaac. As it was through him that the promised seed was to descend, Abraham was desirous that he should take a wife, not from the daughters of the Chanaanites, among whom he then dwelt, but from his own country, Mesopotamia, and from his own kindred. He therefore called to him his faithful servant Eliezer, and bidding him prepare to go into Mesopotamia, said: "The Lord God of heaven, who took me out of my father's house, and out of my native country, who spoke to me, and swore to me, saying: 'To thy seed will I give this land': He will send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take thence a wife for my son."

* A sicle of silver = 2s. 8d. (nearly).

Eliezer hastened to set out; and after choosing ten camels from his master's herd, departed on his journey, and came to the city of Nachor or Haran, where Abraham had made some stay after leaving Ur, and where Nachor, the brother of Abraham, had settled. When Eliezer had made the camels lie down near a well outside the town, at the time when women are wont to come out to draw water, he prayed thus: "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, meet me to-day, I beseech Thee, and show kindness to my master. Behold I stand nigh the spring, and the daughters of the inhabitants of this city will come out to draw water. Now, therefore, the maid to whom I shall say: 'Let down thy pitcher that I may drink': and she shall answer: 'Drink, and I will give thy camels to drink also': let it be the same whom Thou hast provided for Thy servant Isaac; and by this I shall understand that Thou hast shown kindness to my master."

Eliezer's prayer.

He had not yet ended his prayer, when behold there came out of the city Rebecca, the daughter of Bathuel, who was the son of Nachor, Abraham's brother. She was a comely maid, and most beautiful. Bearing on her shoulder a pitcher, she went down to the spring to fill it, and was coming back, when Eliezer drew near and said: "Give me a little water to drink out of thy pitcher." She answered: "Drink, my lord"; and quickly letting down the pitcher upon her arm she gave him to drink. As soon as he had drunk, she offered to draw water for his camels also. For a little while Eliezer regarded her in silent astonishment, convinced by this that she was the one whom God had destined to be the wife of Isaac. He therefore presented her with a pair of bracelets and earrings, and asked her whose daughter she was, and whether at her father's house there was any place for him to lodge in. She told him that she was the daughter of Bathuel, and

Rebecca.

that her father possessed a great store both of straw and hay and a large place to lodge in. Filled with gratitude for this remarkable answer to his petition, Eliezer bowed himself down, and adored the Lord, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not taken away His mercy and truth, and hath brought me the straight way into the house of my master's brother."

The maid ran back to the house to tell all that she had seen and heard; whereupon her brother Laban, after making a few hasty preparations for the stranger's reception, went out to meet Eliezer, whom he thus welcomed: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." He then brought him into his lodging, and invited him to partake of some refreshment while he went to unharness the camels and to give them straw and hay. Eliezer, however, refused to eat till he had delivered his message. Asked to declare the object of his journey, he thus began: "I am the servant of Abraham. The Lord hath blessed my master wonderfully, giving him sheep and oxen, camels and asses, silver and gold, men-servants and women-servants; and he is become great. Moreover, Sara, my master's wife, hath borne a son in her old age, and my master made me swear, saying: 'Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the Chanaanites, in whose land I dwell, but thou shalt go to my father's house and take one from among my own kindred.'" He then told them how he had prayed for guidance, and the wonderful manner in which Rebecca had been pointed out to him as the one destined by God to become the wife of Isaac.

Eliezer declares his mission.

Both Bathuel and Laban saw that the whole matter had been guided by the hand of God, and said to Eliezer: "Behold, Rebecca is before thee: take her and go thy

way, and let her be the wife of thy master's son, as the Lord hath spoken." Thereupon Eliezer produced vessels of silver and gold and rich garments, which he gave to Rebecca as a present, and offered gifts also to her brothers and to her mother. A banquet was then prepared, and they ate and drank together.

Next morning Eliezer rose early, and asked that he might be allowed to return at once to his master's house; but Laban and his mother, not wishing to lose Rebecca so soon, begged him to defer his departure a little longer.

Departure of Rebecca.

"Let the maid stay at least ten days with us," they said, "and afterwards she shall go with thee." On Eliezer's earnest request that they would let him set out immediately, they agreed to refer the matter to Rebecca, who, being convinced that the good steward was directed by God, gave her consent to accompany him without delay. Accordingly, Rebecca and her maids were placed upon camels, and, along with Eliezer, set out at once for the land of Chanaan.

Meeting of Isaac and Rebecca.

As they were approaching their journey's end, they saw Isaac walking in a field where he had gone to meditate, the day being now well spent. He also had perceived them while they were yet afar off. When Rebecca saw Isaac, she alighted from her camel, and as soon as she learned from Eliezer that this was her intended husband, she quickly took her cloak and covered herself with becoming modesty. Isaac went forward to meet them; and on being told by Eliezer all that had happened, he welcomed Rebecca and took her for his wife. His love for her served in a great measure to solace the grief which he still felt for his mother's death. At this time Isaac was 40 years old.

CHAPTER XII

BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB, B.C. 1836—ABRAHAM'S DEATH, B.C. 1821

Birth of Esau and Jacob.

For nearly twenty years Rebecca remained childless, during which time Isaac earnestly besought the Lord for a son. At length, as St. Chrysostom observes, he obtained by prayer what God had long before decreed. When he was 60 years old twin sons were born to him, Esau (*hairy*), the first-born, and Jacob, which means *supplanter*, a name strikingly expressive of his future destiny. Not only in outward appearance were the two brothers very unlike; but as they grew up, they displayed characters which stood in marked contrast to each other. Esau, the favourite of his father, became a husbandman and a daring hunter, while Jacob, who was Rebecca's favourite, was a gentle youth, and followed the more peaceful life of a shepherd.

Esau sells his birthright.

As first-born, Esau enjoyed special privileges, and was, moreover, on his father's death not only entitled to a double share of the inheritance, but also to his father's peculiar blessing. On one occasion, when Esau returned hungry and weary from the chase, he observed his brother with a mess of red pottage made of lentils, and earnestly begged for it. Jacob refused to give it except on the condition that he would part with his birthright in exchange for the savoury meal. Sinking with fatigue and exhaustion, he longed for the food; and, to satisfy his appetite, agreed to surrender the rights and privileges that belonged to him as first-born son. Jacob, however, was not satisfied with a mere promise, but required Esau to confirm the agreement with an oath. This he did; and, as the Scripture

says, "taking bread and *red pottage* of lentils, he ate and drank, and went his way, making little account of having sold his first birthright." It was probably owing to this circumstance that Esau was also called Edom or *red*, while his descendants were spoken of as the Edomites, and the land in which they dwelt was called the land of Edom.

Abraham's children by Cetura.

Soon after the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, Abraham took, as his third wife, Cetura; for Sara, as we have seen, was dead, and perhaps Agar also. By Cetura he had six sons—Zamram, Jecsan, Madan, Madian, Jesboc, and Sue, to whom he gave rich presents, and whom he sent away to the east country, that they might not dispute the inheritance with Isaac. In this way did God provide for Himself witnesses among the Gentiles.

Death of Abraham.

To Isaac, Abraham gave all his possessions, and "being now in a good old age and full of days, he was gathered to his people," at the age of 175 years. Isaac and Ismael, attended, as is generally supposed, by their other brethren, buried him beside Sara in the double cave which is situated over against Mambre. His life was a pattern of all virtues, but particularly of faith; "nor was there found the like to him in glory, who kept the law of the Most High, and was in covenant with Him. In his flesh he established the covenant, and in temptation he was found faithful" (Ecclus. xliv. 20, 21).

Isaac at Gerara.

A famine having visited the land, Isaac was compelled to journey southward, and came to Gerara, where a danger similar to that experienced by Abraham awaited him. He also adopted the device of giving out that his wife was his sister, as his father had done before him, hoping thus to escape any violence from the people of Gerara. But his duplicity

only served to bring upon him a severe reproof from king Abimelech when the real relationship was discovered. Yet he was allowed to remain among the Philistines, and God prospered him exceedingly. He possessed flocks and herds in great numbers, and from the seed which he sowed that year he reaped a hundredfold. His good fortune, however, served but to draw upon him the envy of his neighbours, who strove to drive him from their midst and to prevent his return by filling up all the wells which his father, Abraham, had dug. Even the king, instead of repressing the outrages of his subjects, allowed himself to be swayed by the same petty feeling of jealousy, and requested Isaac to leave the country, as he was becoming mightier than himself. Isaac had no alternative left but to depart. After a time he took up his abode at Bersabee, where the Lord appeared to him and said: "I am the God of Abraham thy father: do not fear, for I am with thee: I will bless thee and multiply thy seed, for My servant Abraham's sake." At Bersabee, Isaac was visited by king Abimelech, who came to renew peace between them; and after a covenant of mutual friendship had been made, the king returned to Gerara.

Esau's marriage.

Soon after this event, Esau, who had now attained the age of 40, married Judith and Basemath, both daughters of the Hethites. As the Hethites were idolaters, the marriage proved a constant source of great grief to Isaac and Rebecca.

Isaac wishes to give his patriarchal blessing.

When Isaac was far advanced in years, and his eyes were growing dim, he called Esau, his elder son, and said to him: "Thou seest that I am old, and know not the day of my death. Take thy arms, thy quiver, and bow, and go abroad; and when thou hast taken something by hunting, make me savoury meat thereof, as thou knowest I like, and bring it that I may eat, and my soul may bless thee before I die."

Rebecca's artifice.

Rebecca overheard what was said; and when Esau had gone into the field to fulfil his father's command, she called Jacob to her and told him all that had happened. Determined at all hazards to secure the blessing for her favourite son, she bade him go in all haste to the flock and bring her two of the fattest kids, that she might prepare them in the way most acceptable to Isaac. Jacob did as she desired; but beginning now to fear lest his father should detect the fraud, he said to his mother: "Thou knowest that Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am smooth: if my father should feel me, and perceive it, I shall bring upon me a curse instead of a blessing." But she, nothing daunted, arrayed Jacob in his brother's garments, and covering his hands and neck with the skins of the kids, bade him carry the meat which she had prepared to his father and ask his blessing.

Jacob's blessing.

Coming into his father's presence, Jacob said: "My father!" Isaac answered: "I hear. Who art thou, my son?" Jacob continued: "I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done as thou didst command me: arise, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." Isaac said to him: "How couldst thou find it so quickly, my son?" Jacob replied: "It was the will of God that what I sought came quickly in my way." Isaac proceeded: "Come hither, that I may feel thee, and may prove whether thou be my son Esau or no." He then came near to his father, who felt him and said: "The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And he knew him not, because his hairy hands made him like to his elder brother. Still doubting, he asked: "Art thou my son Esau?" He answered: "I am." "Then," said he, "bring me the meats of thy hunting, my son, that my soul may bless thee." When they were brought, and he had eaten,

Jacob offered him wine also; and after he had drunk he said to him: "Come near me, and give me a kiss, my son." Jacob did so; and when Isaac perceived the fragrance of his son's garments, he blessed him, saying: "Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed. God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine. Let peoples serve thee, and tribes worship thee: be thou lord of thy brethren, and let thy mother's children bow down before thee. Cursed be he that curseth thee: and let him that blesseth thee be filled with blessings."

Esau's blessing.

Scarcely had Jacob left his father's presence when Esau arrived, bringing in meats prepared of what he had taken in hunting. "My father," said he, "arise, and eat of thy son's venison, that thy soul may bless me." Isaac was struck with fear and astonishment; and, wondering exceedingly, asked: "Who is he, then, that even now brought me venison that he had taken, and I ate of all before thou camest? And I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard his father's words he was amazed, and cried aloud: "Bless me also, my father." Isaac said to him: "Thy brother came deceitfully and got thy blessing." Whereupon Esau added: "Rightly is his name called Jacob, for he hath supplanted me lo this second time. My first birthright he took away before, and now this second time he hath stolen away my blessing. My father, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me also? Hast thou only one blessing, father? I beseech thee bless me, too." He then wept bitterly; and Isaac, being moved with pity, said to him: "In the fat of the earth and in the dew of heaven from above shall thy blessing be. Thou shalt live by the sword, and shalt serve thy brother; and the time shall come when thou shalt shake off his yoke from thy neck."

From this time Esau hated Jacob, and resolved to put him to death, but deferred the time of vengeance till after his father's death. Rebecca, knowing his evil purpose, called Jacob to her and said: "Behold, Esau, thy brother, threateneth to kill thee. Now, therefore, hear my voice: arise and flee to Laban my brother, at Haran, and thou shalt dwell with him till the wrath of thy brother be soothed, and his indignation cease, and he forget the things thou hast done to him. Afterwards I will send and bring thee back hither." Dissembling her real reason for sending Jacob away, she pretended to her husband that she was afraid he might imitate the example of Esau by marrying a woman of Chanaan. She accordingly prevailed on Isaac to let Jacob go to her father Bathuel, in Mesopotamia, that he might take a wife from among the daughters of her brother Laban.

Resentment of Esau.

St. Augustine, commenting upon the words, "I am Esau, thy first-born," excuses Jacob from a lie, because the whole passage is mysterious, expressing, as it does, the fact that the Jews, the chosen people of God, were to be rejected and superseded by the Gentiles. This Jacob by prophetic light may have understood. This much is certain: that the first birthright, both by Divine choice and by Esau's free cession, belonged to Jacob. It was known to Jacob, as well as to Rebecca, that God had marked him out as heir to the Messianic promises, and the intention of both was no doubt good, being as it was to aid the accomplishment of these designs. Yet, even so, one cannot well see how they are to be excused from the guilt of telling a lie, which could not be justified even for the purpose of gaining their end. In their subsequent history, moreover, we seem to recognise the punishment which God inflicted upon them for their sin. Rebecca, who acted out of love for Jacob,

The Morality of Jacob's act.

had to part from him, and never again saw him in life. Jacob was compelled to spend many years in exile, was himself deceived in the matter of his wife Rachel, and had to endure the greatest grief in the loss of his beloved son Joseph. The mystery still remains that God was willing to allow their act to bring out the fulfilment of His decrees. This is inscrutable, and is but one of the many examples of the way in which the wisdom of God has known how to draw good out of the wrong-doings of men.

CHAPTER XIII

JACOB'S FLIGHT—HIS MARRIAGE WITH RACHEL AND LIA

Jacob's departure.

When Jacob was on the point of departing for Mesopotamia, his father blessed him a second time. "May God Almighty bless thee," he said, "and make thee to increase, and give the blessings of Abraham to thee and to thy seed after thee, that thou mayest possess the land of thy sojournment which He promised to thy grandfather." Jacob then bade farewell to his parents, and set out on his journey.

Esau marries the daughter of Ismael.

Esau, seeing that his father had blessed Jacob, and had sent him into Mesopotamia to take a wife, and knowing also that his father was not well pleased with the daughters of Chanaan, went to Ismael, the son of Abraham, and took his daughter Maheleth as his third wife.

Jacob's ladder.

On the first evening after Jacob had left his father's house, he arrived in the neighbourhood of Luza, where, wearied with his long journey, he lay down to rest, placing under his head a stone for a pillow. That night God favoured him with a vision. He saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth and

reaching up to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending by it. The Lord Himself appeared to him on the ladder, and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land wherein thou sleepest I will give to thee and to thy seed. Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth: thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and *in thee* and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed. And I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee back into this land: neither will I leave thee till I have accomplished all that I have said." Now when Jacob awoke out of his sleep, trembling and afraid, he exclaimed: "Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How terrible is this place! This is no other than the house of God and the gate of heaven."

Bethel, the House of God.

Jacob arose, and taking the stone which he had laid under his head, set it up as a memorial, pouring oil on the top of it. And the city, which before had been called Luza, he now named Bethel, the House of God. Here he made a vow, saying: "If God shall be with me, and shall keep me in the way by which I walk, and shall give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, and I shall return prosperously to my father's house, the Lord shall be my God; and this stone which I have set up for a title shall be called the house of God: and of all things that Thou shalt give to me, I will offer tithes to Thee." Thus was Jacob comforted with the assurance that God was with him, and would take him under His special protection.

The meaning of Jacob's vision.

Much has been written with regard to this mysterious vision. We are told that the angels *ascending* foreshadowed that Jacob's journey would be prosperous; and *descending*, showed that he would return in safety. Some see in the ladder a figure of

the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. He is the *way* by which we must ascend, by observing the *truth*, till we obtain *life* eternal. The steps of the ladder signify the virtues of Christ; and it is by walking in His footsteps and imitating His virtues that we shall attain salvation. We are reminded, too, of the particular care which God always takes of His faithful servants. "In all occurrences of life, He is ever present with them; in their most pressing wants, His holy angels are waiting by their side, witnesses of their conduct, and ready to present their petitions to Almighty God." They are God's "ministering spirits that do His will."

Jacob arrives at Haran.

Jacob, thus assured of the Divine protection, resumed his journey, and came into the east country where Laban dwelt. Here he saw a well and three flocks of sheep lying by it; but the mouth of the well was closed with a great stone. Going up to the shepherds, he asked them if they knew Laban. They answered that they did; and while they were yet speaking, behold Rachel, the daughter of Laban, was seen approaching the well to water her flock. Being told who she was, Jacob immediately went to meet his cousin, and saluting her, informed her that he was her father's nephew and the son of Rebecca. He then rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well that her flocks might drink. Rachel went in haste and told the glad tidings to her father, who, when he heard that Jacob, his sister's son, was come, ran forth to welcome him, and brought him into his house.

Jacob's marriage.

When Jacob had explained to his uncle the reason for his leaving home, and the object of his long journey, Laban proposed that he should remain with him and serve him as a shepherd. Asked what wages he would require in return for his services, Jacob answered that he would serve Laban seven

years, if at the end of that time he might be allowed to marry Rachel. To this Laban consented, and Jacob thought the seven years seemed but a few days because of the greatness of his love. But a bitter disappointment was in store for him. On the very night of the marriage, Laban, under pretence of being unwilling to see Rachel married before her elder sister, substituted Lia in her stead. No sooner did Jacob discover the deceit that had been practised upon him than he went to Laban, and reproached him for his want of sincerity, and for the injustice done to him. Laban, after he had explained the reason of his action, promised that in seven days he would also give him Rachel in marriage, on condition that he would serve him yet another seven years. Jacob agreed to the proposal, and after the week was past he married Rachel also. During his stay with Laban he became the father of a numerous family, consisting of *eleven sons* and a daughter named *Dina*.

Lia bore him *Ruben*, *Simeon*, *Levi*, *Juda*, *Issachar*, *Zabulon*, and *Dina*.

Rachel was the mother of *Joseph;* and some time after Jacob's departure from Laban's house, she also gave birth to a second son, *Benjamin*.

Jacob, moreover, took as secondary wives Bala and Zelpha, the handmaids of Rachel and Lia respectively. The sons of Bala were *Dan* and *Nephtali*, those of Zelpha were *Gad* and *Aser*.

CHAPTER XIV

JACOB'S RETURN, B.C. 1739

Soon after the birth of Joseph, Jacob desired leave of his father-in-law to return to his own country. "Give me," said he, "my wives and my children, for whom I have

served thee, that I may depart: thou knowest the service that I have rendered thee." But Laban, knowing how God had blessed him since Jacob had taken up his abode with him, besought him to remain and name the wages that should be given him. Finally they came to an agreement according to which Jacob was to serve Laban six years longer, and receive, in return for his labours, a certain share of the flocks. All the spotted sheep and goats and those of divers colours were to be considered Jacob's property, while those of one colour were to remain to Laban.

Jacob's desire to return.

So much did Almighty God bless Jacob in his possessions that Laban and his sons grew jealous of him, and lowered his wages again and again. He therefore determined to start for his own country as soon as a favourable opportunity should present itself. In his resolve he was strengthened by a vision in which God said to him: "I am the God of Bethel where thou didst anoint the stone and make a vow to Me. Now, therefore, arise, and go out of this land, and return into thy native country."

Jacob made known his intention to Rachel and Lia, and while Laban was away in the country shearing his sheep, he got together all his goods and prepared to depart at once. Having placed his wives and children upon camels, he crossed the river Euphrates and directed his steps towards the land of Chanaan, without taking leave of Laban.

His secret departure.

Before setting out, Rachel, unknown to her husband, secretly stole her father's idols, which she concealed in the camel's furniture, and carried off with her. Three days afterwards, when Laban was informed of the unexpected flight of his son-in-law, he at once called together his dependants, and set out in pursuit. Following the same route which the fugitives had taken, he came up with them on the seventh day

Laban pursues after Jacob.

encamped on the mountain range of *Galaad* (*Gilead*), where he also pitched his tent, and where God appeared to him in a dream, and said: "Take heed thou speak not anything harshly against Jacob." He now came up to Jacob, and said: "Why hast thou done thus, to carry away, without my knowledge, my daughters as captives taken with the sword? Why wouldst thou run away privately, and not acquaint me, that I might have brought thee on the way with joy, and with songs, and with timbrels, and with harps? Thou hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and daughters; thou hast done foolishly. And suppose thou didst desire to go to thy friends, and hadst a longing after thy father's house, why hast thou stolen away my gods?" Jacob answered: "I departed unknown to thee for fear lest thou wouldst take away thy daughters by force. But, whereas thou chargest me with theft, with whomsoever thou shalt find thy gods, let him be slain before our brethren." Now when he said this, he knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

The search for the stolen idols.

Search was made in Jacob's tent, but to no purpose: nowhere could they discover the idols. In like manner Lia's tent and those of the two handmaids were examined, but with the same result. At length they came to the tent of Rachel, the real culprit, who in haste had hidden the idols, and was sitting upon them at the moment of their entering. They searched all around, till they came to where Rachel was seated; but she begged they would excuse her for not rising to salute them, as she was not sufficiently well to stand. Thus was their careful search in vain. Jacob was angry with Laban, and scornfully demanded: "For what fault of mine, and for what offence on my part, hast thou so hotly pursued me, and searched all my household stuff? What hast thou found of all the substance of thy house? Lay it here before my brethren and thy brethren, and let

them judge between me and thee. For twenty years have I been with thee. All that by accident was damaged I made good; whatsoever was lost by theft thou didst exact of me; day and night was I parched with heat and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes. In this manner have I served thee in thy house, fourteen years for thy daughters, and six for thy flocks: thou hast changed also my wages ten times. God beheld my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesterday."

Laban returns home.

After thus mutually reproaching each other, they soon forgot the subject of their quarrel, and their meeting ended peacefully. They now entered into a solemn league. Stones were gathered and made into a heap, which Laban called *Galaad*, or *The Witness Heap*, and Jacob *The Hillock of Testimony*. Beyond this neither was to pass to injure the other's possessions. That night Laban arose and kissed his daughters and their children; and having blessed them, he bade them farewell and returned home.

Jacob's vision of angels.

Thus relieved from fear of Laban, Jacob proceeded on his way, and was met by angels in a spot which he named Mahanaim, or *The Two Camps*, saying: "These are the camps of God." From this place he sent messengers before him to Esau, who was then dwelling in the neighbourhood of Mount Seir, in the land of Edom, a district lying principally to the south of the Dead Sea. "Tell him," said he, "I have sojourned with Laban, and have been with him until this day: I have oxen, asses, and sheep, men-servants and women-servants, and now I send messengers that I may find favour in the sight of my lord." Soon the messengers returned, and informed Jacob that Esau was coming with all speed to meet him, accompanied by 400 men. Then Jacob was greatly terrified, and in his fear divided the people that were with him, as well as the flocks, the sheep,

the oxen, and the camels into two companies. "If Esau come to one company and destroy it," he said, "the other company that is left shall escape." He then prayed thus: 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac: O God who saidst to me, 'Return to thy land, and to the place of thy birth, and I will do well for thee,' I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies and of Thy truth which Thou hast fulfilled to Thy servant. With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I return with two companies. Deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am greatly afraid of him, lest perhaps he come and kill the mother with the children. Thou didst say that Thou wouldst do well by me, and multiply my seed like the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." After he had slept there that night, he set apart, as presents for his brother Esau, 220 goats and as many sheep, besides a large number of camels, oxen, and asses. These he sent on by his servants, commanding the leaders of the different droves to present them successively to his brother, with the words: "Thy servant Jacob hath sent them as a present to my lord Esau, and he himself cometh after us." In this way did Jacob hope to appease the anger of his brother.

Jacob wrestles with an angel.

Having sent forward the presents, Jacob remained behind for a time in the camp; then taking his wives and their two handmaids, together with his children, he sent them over the ford of Jaboc. When his flocks and herds had crossed, and all his belongings had been safely conveyed to the other side, Jacob remained alone to pray. That he might learn that neither Esau nor any other man should have power to hurt him, there appeared to him in the night a man who wrestled with him; and after the struggle had lasted till morning, and Jacob still refused to yield, the man, or rather the angel in human shape, seeing that he could not overcome

his antagonist, touched his thigh, which straightway began to shrink. Still Jacob would not relax his hold till the stranger had promised to give him his blessing. The angel then asked him his name; and being told that it was Jacob, he said: "Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but ISRAEL (*one that prevaileth against God*); for if thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men?" Thereupon the angel vanished, and Jacob called the name of the place Phanuel, that is, *the Face of God;* for he said: "I have seen God face to face, and my soul [*i.e.*, *my life*] has been saved." In memory of the shrinking of Jacob's sinew, which left him lame, the children of Israel from this time forth refrained from eating the corresponding sinew in the thigh of any animal.

Reconciliation of Esau and Jacob.

When morning dawned, Jacob crossed the ford; and seeing Esau with his 400 followers coming in the distance, he at once proceeded to arrange his company. He placed both the handmaids and their children in front, Lia and her children in the second place, and Rachel and Joseph last; while he himself went forward and bowed down seven times with his face to the ground until Esau came up. As soon as Esau perceived it was Jacob, all feelings of animosity left his heart. Overjoyed at meeting his brother once again, he ran to embrace him, and clasping him about the neck and kissing him, wept for joy. It was with difficulty that Esau could be prevailed upon to accept any of the gifts, and only after Jacob's earnest entreaty did he finally give his consent. His anger against Jacob was now forgotten, and he besought him to accompany him on his journey; but Jacob said: "My lord, thou knowest that I have with me tender children, and sheep, and cattle. If my herds be overdriven, in one day will they all die. May it please thee, then, to go before me: I will follow softly after, as I shall see my children to be

able, until I come to my lord in Seir. I want nothing else, only to find favour in thy sight." Esau accepted so reasonable an excuse, and meanwhile returned to his own country.

After parting from his brother, Jacob came to Socoth (*tents*), where he built a house for himself, and put up tents or booths for his cattle. Here he appears to have stayed a considerable time before he crossed the Jordan, and passed over to *Salem* or *Sichem*, a city of the Sichemites, in the land of Chanaan. From them he purchased a piece of land on which he pitched his tent, and raised an altar to "the most mighty God of Israel."

CHAPTER XV

JACOB IN SICHEM—JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT, B.C. 1728

Dina.

It was during Jacob's residence at Sichem that Dina, his daughter, went out of curiosity to see the women of the country. Her rashness, however, cost her dear. Sichem, the son of Hemor, the prince of that land, saw her, and being captivated with her great beauty, took her away forcibly.

When Jacob heard what had happened, he held his peace till the return of his sons, who were absent feeding their flocks. On being told what had befallen their sister, they were exceedingly angry, and meditated revenge. Hemor and his son now came to Jacob, and offered to make every amends in their power if he would but give his daughter in marriage to Sichem. The sons of Jacob answered them deceitfully: "We cannot do as you demand, nor give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; but in this we may be allied with you, if you will be like us, and all the male sex among you be circumcised: then

will we mutually give and take your daughters and ours, and will dwell with you and be one people. If you will not be circumcised, we will take our sister and depart." Their offer pleased Hemor and Sichem, who, without delay, fulfilled what was required.

Slaughter of the Sichemites.

Now on the third day, when the Sichemites were weakest from the effects of circumcision, Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dina, taking their swords, entered boldly into the city, and slew every man therein. They then took away their sister Dina out of Sichem's house; and no sooner had they left than the other sons of Jacob came and plundered the city in revenge for the wrong that their sister had suffered. They likewise drove off the flocks and herds of the slain, destroyed their crops, and took captive their wives and children.

Jacob moves to Bethel.

On hearing of this act of treachery on the part of his sons, Jacob was bitterly grieved, and said to Simeon and Levi: "You have troubled me, and made me hateful to the inhabitants of this land. We are few: they will gather themselves together and kill me; and both I and my house shall be destroyed." The Lord, however, appeared to him and said: "Arise and go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar to God, who appeared to thee when thou didst flee from Esau thy brother." After Jacob and his family had departed, the terror of God fell upon the inhabitants of the surrounding cities, and they durst not pursue them as they went away. When he arrived at Bethel, Jacob did as he had been commanded, and here Almighty God again appeared to him and, confirming the words of the angel, blessed him, saying: "Thou shalt not be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name. Increase thou and be multiplied. Nations and kings shall be from thee: the land which I gave to Abraham and to Isaac, I will give to thee and to thy seed after thee."

About this time, Debora, the nurse of Rebecca, died. She was buried at the foot of Bethel, under an oak, in memory of which event the place was named *The Oak of Weeping*.

Death of Rachel.

Moving southward from Bethel in the direction of Hebron, Jacob first came to Ephrata (*Bethlehem*), where Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. When she was at the point of death, she named the infant Benoni, that is, *the son of my sorrow;* but, that the name might not hereafter remind him too sensibly of his loss, his father gave him a more auspicious one, and called him Benjamin, or *the son of the right hand.*

Death of Isaac, B.C. 1716.

At length Jacob arrived at Hebron, where he remained till after the death of Isaac, which occurred at the advanced age of 180 years. The venerable patriarch was laid to rest by his two sons, by the side of Abraham, Sara, and Rebecca, in the double cave at Mambre.

Joseph's dreams.

While Jacob was still living at Hebron, and twelve years before the death of Isaac, a grievous trial overtook him. The most beloved of all his sons was Joseph, the son of Rachel, and the youngest of those that were born to him in Mesopotamia. Now when Joseph was sixteen years old, he was one day in the fields with his brethren, the sons of Bala and Zelpha, and on his return home accused them to his father of a most wicked crime. This filled them all with anger against him. Their ill-feeling, moreover, was increased by the preference shown to him by his father, who, as a mark of his love for him, had made him a coat of many colours. About this time, also, Joseph had a dream, which he told to his brethren, and which caused them to dislike him the more. He said to them: "Hear my dream. I thought we were binding sheaves in the field, and my

sheaf arose as it were, and stood, and your sheaves standing about bowed down before my sheaf." On hearing this, they asked him if he thought that he was to be their king, and that they were to be subject to his dominion.

Soon afterwards, Joseph had another dream, which he related as follows: "I saw in a dream, as it were the sun, the moon, and eleven stars worshipping me." Upon this, his father rebuked him, and asked: "What meaneth this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother,* and thy brethren worship thee upon the earth?" The dislike of his brethren now deepened into hatred; but his father considered the matter within himself, believing, no doubt, that his son's mysterious dreams contained some prophetical meaning.

Joseph goes to seek his brethren.

It chanced a very short time after this, that while Jacob's other sons were away in the fields feeding their flocks, he called Joseph to him and said: "Thy brethren feed the sheep in Sichem: come, I will send thee to them. Go, and see if all things be well with them, and the cattle: and bring me word." Joseph lost no time in setting out; and having arrived at Sichem, he was wandering in the fields in quest of them, when a man came up and asked him what he sought. Joseph told his errand, and was directed to go to Dothain, some twelve miles to the north of Sichem, where he would find them. When his brethren saw him afar off they thought to kill him, and said one to another: "Behold here is the dreamer. Come, let us kill him, and cast him into some old pit: and we will tell our father that some beast hath devoured him: and then it shall appear what his dreams avail him." Ruben, who wished to deliver him out of their hands, and to restore

* As this dream occurred after Rachel's death, the reference here is probably to Lia who may have been living at this time: or perhaps Bala, the nurse of Joseph, is indicated by the moon.

him to his father, tried to restrain them from an act so wicked. "Do not take away his life," he entreated, "nor shed his blood; but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and keep your hands harmless."

They cast Joseph into a well.

As soon as Joseph came up, they seized him: and after stripping him of his coat of divers colours, cast him into an old well in which there was no water. In a short time, while they were sitting down to their meal, they espied some *Ismaelites* coming from Galaad with their camels, carrying spices, and balm, and myrrh to Egypt. On seeing them, Juda said to the others: "What will it profit us to kill our brother, and conceal his blood? It is better that he be sold to the Ismaelites, and that our hands be not defiled: for he is our brother." The proposal was agreed to by all except Ruben, who chanced to be absent at the time; and Joseph was accordingly drawn out of the well and sold for twenty pieces of silver to the Ismaelite merchants, who continued their journey to Egypt.

Joseph sold into Egypt.

Scarcely had they got out of sight, when Ruben returned to the well in the hope of rescuing his brother; but when he did not find the boy, he was filled with grief, not knowing what had become of him.

After Joseph's heartless brethren had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid which they had just killed, they sent it to their father by messengers, who, coming into Jacob's presence, said: "This we have found in the fields: see whether it be thy son's coat or not." Jacob no sooner recognised it than, overwhelmed with grief, he exclaimed: "It is indeed my son's coat: an evil beast hath eaten him, a beast hath devoured Joseph." Then tearing his garments, he put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son a long time; and all his children being gathered together to comfort him, he would not be con-

Jacob's grief.

soled; but cried out with sorrow: "Mourning will I go down into the grave to my son Joseph."

In the meantime the Ismaelites conducted Joseph into Egypt and sold him to Putiphar, a captain of king Pharao's guards.

CHAPTER XVI

JOSEPH IN EGYPT—THE FAMINE, B.C. 1708

Joseph in Putiphar's house.

JOSEPH soon found favour with his master, who, seeing his many excellent qualities, and that the Lord was with him and made all that he did to prosper, committed his household to his charge. God also blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and so multiplied his substance that he knew not the extent of his riches.

Now Joseph was comely, and soon attracted the admiration of Putiphar's wife, who tried by every means in her power to lead him into sin; but he turned a deaf ear to all her solicitations. "How can I," he said to her, "do so wicked a thing and sin against God? Or how can I thus prove myself unfaithful to my master, who has entrusted all things to my care?" On a certain day, however, while Joseph was alone, she came to him a second time, and again urged him to the same sin, this time seizing his cloak. To escape the danger Joseph fled out of the room, but unfortunately left his cloak in her hands. Finding herself thus scorned, her love was changed into hatred, and she made up her mind to ruin Joseph by charging him with the very crime that she herself had in vain been urging him to commit. She cried aloud, pretending that Joseph had assaulted her; and in proof of her assertion pointed to the cloak which she still held in her hand. Her husband believed her story, and filled with anger at Joseph's supposed wickedness, cast him into prison.

seph in ison.

The Lord did not abandon Joseph in prison, but gave him such favour with the chief gaoler, that all the other prisoners were committed to his care. Now it chanced that two of the king's officers, the chief butler and the chief baker, fell into disgrace with Pharao, and were thrown into the same prison with Joseph. On the same night each had a dream which neither could interpret; and when Joseph came next morning and found them downcast, he asked them why they were that day sadder than usual. They told him of the dreams they had had, and that they were distressed because nobody could explain the meaning to them. Joseph said: "Doth not interpretation belong to God? Tell me what you have dreamed."

he dream of e chief butler.

The *chief butler* first told his dream. "I saw before me," said he, "a vine on which were three branches, which by little and little sent out buds, and, after the blossoms, brought forth ripe grapes. The cup of Pharao was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into the cup, which I presented to Pharao." Joseph answered: "This is the interpretation of thy dream. The three branches are yet three days, after which Pharao will remember thy service, and will restore thee to thy former place; and thou shalt present him the cup according to thy office as usual. Only remember me when it shall be well with thee, and do me the kindness of asking Pharao to take me out of this prison; for I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here, without any fault, was cast into the dungeon."

ne dream of e chief baker.

Then the *chief baker* said: "I dreamt that I had three baskets of meal upon my head, and that in the basket which was uppermost I carried all kinds of pastry, which the birds came and ate." Joseph said to him: "This is the interpreta-

tion of the dream. The three baskets represent three days, after which Pharao will take thy head from thee, and hang thee on a cross, and the birds shall tear thy flesh."

The third day after this was the birthday of Pharao. He made a great feast for his servants, and at the banquet remembered the chief butler and the chief baker. The former he restored to his place to present the cup: the latter he hanged on a gibbet, thus proving the truth of Joseph's interpretation. But the chief butler, when things prospered with him, forgot Joseph; and it was not till after two years had passed away that he called to mind the promise he had made to him to plead his cause with the king.

Joseph's prediction verified.

One night, Pharao himself had two strange dreams; and when morning was come, being struck with fear, he sent to all the interpreters of Egypt, and to all the wise men; but no one could unfold their meaning. Then at length the chief butler, remembering Joseph, told the king how a certain young Hebrew servant had explained his own dream and that of the chief baker two years previously, and how strikingly the interpretation had been fulfilled. The king at once ordered the young man to be brought out of prison, and to be presented before him. When Joseph had been admitted into the king's presence, Pharao said to him: "I have dreamt dreams, and there is no one who can expound them: now, I have heard that thou art very wise at interpreting them." Joseph replied: "God shall give Pharao a prosperous answer." The king then related to Joseph what he had dreamt. "In my dream," he said, "I seemed to stand upon the bank of the river, and seven kine came up out of the river, exceedingly beautiful and fat, and they grazed on green places in a marshy pasture. And behold there followed these, other seven kine, so

Pharao's dreams.

very ill-favoured and lean that I never saw the like in the land of Egypt; and they devoured and consumed the former. After that I awoke, and falling asleep again, I dreamt that I saw seven ears of corn grow upon one stalk, full and very fair. Other seven also, thin and blasted, appeared, and they devoured the beauty of the former."

Joseph's interpretation.

Joseph said to the king: "God hath shown to Pharao what He is about to do. The seven beautiful kine, and the seven full ears, are seven years of plenty; and both contain the same meaning. The seven lean and thin kine that came up after them, and the seven thin ears that were blasted with the burning wind, are the seven years of famine to come, which shall be fulfilled in this order. Behold, there shall come seven years of great plenty in the whole land of Egypt, after which shall follow other seven years of so great a scarcity that all the abundance before shall be forgotten; for the famine shall consume all the land, and the greatness of the scarcity shall destroy the greatness of the plenty. Now, therefore, let the king provide a wise and industrious man, and make him ruler over the land of Egypt, that he may appoint overseers in all the countries, and gather into barns the fifth part of the fruits during the seven fruitful years. And let all the corn be laid up under Pharao's hands, and be reserved in the cities, and let it be in readiness against the famine of seven years to come, which shall oppress Egypt."

Joseph's greatness.

This counsel pleased Pharao and his servants; and turning to those about him, he asked: "Can we find such another man that is full of the spirit of God?" To Joseph he said: "Seeing God hath shown thee all that thou hast said, can I find one wiser and one like unto thee? Thou shalt be over my house, and at thy command all the people shall obey:

only in the kingly throne will I be above thee. Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt." Pharao then took off his ring from his own hand and gave it to Joseph; and he put on him a robe of silk, and a chain of gold about his neck; and he made him go up into his second chariot, while at the same time he proclaimed that all should bow their knee before him as governor over the whole land of Egypt. He also changed Joseph's name, calling him in the Egyptian tongue "*The Saviour of the World*": and gave him in marriage Aseneth, the daughter of Putiphare, priest of Heliopolis.

Joseph, who was now 30 years old, in course of time became the father of two sons, the elder of whom he called Manasses, a word signifying *forgetfulness*, because the father's present happiness made him forget his former misfortunes; and the younger Ephraim, meaning *fruitful* or *restored*, because having been poor and afflicted, he was now, with God's blessing, advanced to the highest honours.

Joseph's sons.

As had been foretold, the fruitfulness of the seven years came. The corn was bound, and gathered into barns, and abundance of grain was laid up in every city. But when the seven years of plenty that had been in Egypt were passed, the years of scarcity, which Joseph had also predicted, began to follow; and the famine prevailed not only in Egypt, but in all the surrounding countries. The people in their distress cried to Pharao for food, but he commanded them to go to Joseph, and to do all that he should tell them. Seeing that the famine increased daily throughout the land, Joseph opened the barns, and sold not only to the Egyptians, but to those who, from other lands, had come into Eygpt to buy corn, and to seek relief in their need.

The famine.

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CHAPTER XVII

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN GO DOWN INTO EGYPT

Joseph's brethren are sent into Egypt.

THE famine having spread to the land of Chanaan, where Jacob and his family dwelt, the holy patriarch, hearing that corn was to be bought in Egypt, sent thither ten of his sons. Benjamin, the youngest, he did not send, lest harm might befall him on the way. The sons of Jacob, therefore, went down into Egypt along with others that went to buy corn, and being conducted to Joseph, they bowed down before him. How literally was fulfilled the dream which Joseph had on a previous occasion related to them!

They are recognised by Joseph.

Joseph recognised them at once, although they did not know him. Yet he did not reveal himself; on the contrary he spoke harshly to them, and charged them with being spies, saying that they had come to find out the undefended parts of the land. With great humility they told him that they were not spies, but that they had come from the land of Chanaan to buy the necessaries of life. "We are," they said, "twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Chanaan: the youngest is with our father, the other is not living." Joseph still pretended not to believe them, and replied: "I shall now presently try what you are: by the health of Pharao, you shall not depart hence until your youngest brother come. Send one of your number to fetch him: and the rest of you shall be in prison till it be proved whether what you have said be true or false: or else, by the health of Pharao, you are spies."

Joseph detains them in prison for three days.

For three days he kept them in prison, at the end of which time he brought them before him and said: "Do as I have commanded, and you shall live. If you be peaceable men, let one of

your brethren be bound in prison; and the rest of you go your way and carry back the corn which you have bought. Bring back to me your youngest brother that I may find your words to be true, and that you may not die."

They prepared to do his bidding; but before departing on their way, they said one to another: "We deserve to suffer these things because we have sinned against our brother, seeing the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this affliction come upon us." And Ruben added: "Did not I ask you not to do that sin against the boy, and you would not hear me? Behold his blood is required."

Now they knew not that Joseph understood their conversation, because he had spoken to them through an interpreter; but he, hearing them speak with sorrow of his supposed death, turned himself away a little while and wept. Having recovered his composure, he spoke to them again: then taking Simeon, he had him bound in their presence; and at the same time gave secret orders to his servants to fill their sacks with wheat, to put every man's money again in the mouth of his sack, and to give them, besides, provisions for the way. With the exception of Simeon the rest were now permitted to load their asses and to depart.

Their return home.

When they had proceeded some distance on their journey, one of them opened his sack at the inn to give his beast provender, and there discovered the money which had been concealed by Joseph's servants. At this they were all astonished, and said to one another: "What is this that God hath done unto us?" Troubled in mind, they continued their journey, and at length arrived safely in the land of Chanaan, where they found Jacob anxiously awaiting their return. They told him all that had befallen them during their absence: how the lord of the land of Egypt had

spoken roughly to them, and taken them to be spies; and how Simeon had been detained in prison, where he was to remain till they took their youngest brother Benjamin, as a proof that they had spoken the truth and were not spies. When they had finished speaking, they poured out their corn, and every man found his money tied in the mouth of his sack. All were filled with fear and wonder, while Jacob, overwhelmed with grief, exclaimed: "You have made me to be without children: Joseph is not living; Simeon is kept in bonds; and Benjamin you will take away: all these evils are fallen upon me."

Jacob laments.

Ruben, seeing how great was his father's sorrow, said to him: "Kill my two sons if I bring not Benjamin again to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will restore him to thee." Jacob answered: "My son shall not go down with you: his brother is dead, and he is alone: if any mischief befall him in the land to which you go, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

In the meantime the famine did not abate, but continued to rage more fiercely than ever. The corn which Jacob's sons had brought from Egypt was now consumed, and it was evident that they must either return to buy more, or die of hunger. Juda said to his father: "The governor declared with an oath that we should not see his face again unless we brought our youngest brother with us: if, therefore, thou wilt send him with us, we will set out together, and will buy necessaries for thee; but if thou wilt not, we will not go. Send the boy, that we may set forward and may live, lest both we and our children perish. I take the boy upon me: require him at my hand: unless I bring him again, and restore him to thee, I will be guilty of sin against thee for ever."

At length, unable to hold out any longer, Jacob said to his sons: "If it must needs be so, do what you will: take

of the best fruits of the land, and carry down presents to the man. Take with you double money, and carry back what you found in your sacks, lest perhaps it was done by mistake. Take your brother also, and go to the man, and may God make him favourable to you, and send back with you your brother whom he keepeth, and this Benjamin: as for me, I shall be desolate without children." The sons did as their father commanded, and again set out for Egypt.

Again Jacob sends his sons to buy corn.

When Joseph heard of their arrival, and that Benjamin was with them, he gave orders for a feast to be prepared, and bade his steward bring the strangers to him. Finding themselves once more conducted before the governor, they were surprised and afraid, and said to one another: "Because of the money which we carried back the first time in our sacks, we are brought in, that he may accuse us falsely, and by violence make slaves of us." Then turning to the steward, they thus addressed him: "Sir, we desire thee to hear us. We came down once before to buy food; and when we returned, we opened our sacks and found our money in the mouths of the sacks, nor can we tell who put it there; but we have now brought back the same amount, and other money besides to buy what we want."

They again appear before Joseph.

The steward answered: "Peace be with you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks." He then brought out Simeon to them, and gave them water to wash their feet, and provender for their asses.

They now got ready the presents which they had brought with them; and when Joseph came into the room, they bowed down with their faces to the ground and offered them to him. He saluted them in return, and asked if their aged father was still living and in health: then seeing Benjamin in their midst, he inquired

if he was the youngest brother of whom they had spoken. Being informed that he was, he turned to Benjamin and said: "God be gracious to thee, my son." Feeling that he could no longer restrain his emotion, he made haste, because his heart was full. The tears began to well in his eyes, and that his brethren might not perceive his agitation, he retired to another apartment and wept. After he had succeeded in calming his feelings, and had washed his face to remove all signs of tears, he returned to his brethren, and commanded his servants to set food before them. Joseph himself sat at a table apart, for it was not lawful for an Egyptian to eat with Hebrews. But great was their surprise when they found that Joseph, in assigning their places at table, arranged each one according to his age, while to Benjamin he gave a portion which exceeded that of any of the others by five parts. That day they feasted and made merry, deferring their departure till the following day.

Joseph's emotion.

In the meantime Joseph commanded the steward of his house to fill their sacks with corn, and to put the money of each one in the top of his sack; but in the mouth of Benjamin's sack to fasten his own silver cup along with the price of the wheat.

Early next morning they arose and took their departure; but hardly had they commenced their journey when they were overtaken by Joseph's steward, who accused them of having stolen his master's silver cup. Their astonishment at being charged with an act so base, and at the same time so ungrateful, may well be imagined. Convinced of their innocence, they said to the steward: "Why doth our lord speak so, as though thy servants had committed so wicked a crime? The money that we found in the top of our sacks, we brought back to thee from the land of Chanaan: how, then, can it be that we should steal gold or

silver out of thy lord's house? With whomsoever shall be found that which thou seekest, let him die, and we will be the bondmen of thy lord." The steward answered: "Let it be according to your sentence: With whomsoever it shall be found, let him be my servant, and you shall be blameless." They then speedily took down their sacks and opened them; and to their confusion and dismay, the cup was found in the mouth of *Benjamin's* sack. In their grief they rent their garments, and, after loading their asses again, returned into the town.

Joseph's silver cup found in Benjamin's sack.

With Juda at their head they went in to Joseph, and all prostrated themselves before him. Joseph said to them: "Why did you do so?" Juda answered: "What can we say, my lord; or what excuse can we make? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold, we are all bondmen to my lord, both we and he with whom the cup was found." Joseph replied: "God forbid that I should do so: he that stole the cup shall be my bondman: and go you away free to your father." Then Juda, coming nearer, said boldly: "I beseech thee, my lord, let thy servant speak a word in thy ears, and be not angry with me. Thou didst ask us the first time if we had a father, or a brother; and we answered thee that we had a father, an old man, and a boy that was born to him in his old age, and that his brother by the same mother was dead. He alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him tenderly. Thou didst command us to bring him hither, that thou mightest set thy eyes on him. Moreover, thou didst say to us that, unless our youngest brother accompanied us, we should see thy face no more. This we told to our father, but he, overcome with grief, said: 'You know that my wife Rachel bore me two sons. One went out, whom you said a beast had devoured, and hitherto he hath not appeared.

If you take this one also, and anything befall him in the way, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.' Therefore, if I shall go to thy servant our father, and the boy be wanting, and he shall see that he is not with us, he will die of sorrow. Let me be thy servant, who took him into my trust, and whom I promised to return in safety to his father. I, thy servant, will stay in the service of my lord instead of the boy, and let him go with his brethren: for I cannot return without him, lest I be a witness of the calamity that will oppress my father."

Joseph could restrain his pent-up feelings no longer. He commanded his attendants to leave the room; then, left alone with his brethren, he exclaimed in a voice trembling with emotion: "I am Joseph: is my father yet living?" His brethren could not answer him, being struck with exceeding great fear. But he spoke mildly to them, saying: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not afraid, and let it not seem to you a hard thing that you sold me into this country, for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation. It is now two years since the famine began in the land, and five years more remain. Not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will of God, who hath made me as it were a father to Pharao, and lord of his whole house, and governor in all the land of Egypt. Make haste, and go to my father, and tell him that his son Joseph is still living: tell him to come down to me and to linger not. You shall tell my father of all my glory, and all things that you have seen in Egypt; make haste, and bring him to me." Then falling upon the neck of Benjamin, he clasped him to his breast and wept; and Benjamin, in like manner, wept as he returned Joseph's fond embrace. He also tenderly embraced each of the others, and only then were they able to speak to him.

Joseph makes himself known.

Soon the news spread to the royal palace that Joseph's brethren had come, and Pharao and all his family rejoiced. Without delay the king called Joseph, and bade him tell them to load their beasts at once, and go into the land of Chanaan, and bring thence their father and kindred, and come to him. Joseph, accordingly, gave them waggons and provisions for the journey, and ordered two robes to be brought out for every one of them; but to Benjamin he gave 300 pieces of silver with five robes of the best.

They then returned with all speed into the land of Chanaan to their father Jacob, to whom they related all that had happened, and the joyful tidings that not only was Joseph still living, but that he was ruler over the whole land of Egypt. When Jacob heard this, he awakened as it were out of a deep sleep, yet did not believe them; but when he saw the waggons and all that Joseph had sent, his spirit revived, and he said: "It is enough for me if Joseph, my son, be yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob learns that Joseph is still alive.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM JACOB'S GOING TO EGYPT UNTIL THE DEATH OF JOSEPH, B.C. 1706 TO B.C. 1635

Jacob immediately set about making preparations for his journey, and gathered together all his possessions. Leaving Hebron, he came to Bersabee, or the *well of oath*, where he offered sacrifice to the God of his father, and by prayer sought to know the Divine will. In the night he had a vision in which God appeared to him and said: "I am the most mighty God of thy father: fear not, go down into Egypt, for I will make a great nation of thee there. Thither will I go

Jacob departs for Egypt.

down with thee, and will bring thee back again: Joseph also shall put his hands upon thy eyes." Comforted by the Divine assurance, he rose up from the *well of oath*, and taking with him his eleven sons and their wives and children, in all to the number of seventy, at once set out for Egypt. Juda was sent in advance to tell Joseph of his coming, and to request that he would meet him in the land of Gessen, a district lying to the north-east of Egypt and near to the Promised Land.

Most affecting was the meeting of the father with his long-lost son, whom for so many years he had counted as dead. As soon as Joseph saw his father coming in the distance, he descended from his chariot and advanced on foot to welcome him. They met and tenderly embraced each other, and for a time were unable to utter a word, so great was their emotion from the joy of this reunion. When Jacob, in his excess of happiness, could find voice to speak, he said to Joseph: "Now shall I die with joy, because I have seen thy face, and shall leave thee alive."

Meeting of Jacob with Joseph.

Leaving Jacob to follow after with the rest of the company, Joseph took five of his brethren and hastened in advance to apprise Pharao of their coming. Before presenting them to the king, he instructed them how they were to answer should Pharao inquire of them concerning their occupation. "Tell him," said he, "that you are shepherds, that he may give you leave to follow your calling, and may grant as your abode the rich pasture-land of Gessen." It happened as Joseph had anticipated; for the king, on being requested that the land of Gessen might be assigned to them, turned to Joseph and said: "The land of Egypt is before thee. Make thy father and thy brethren dwell in the best place, and give them the land of Gessen: and if thou knowest that there are

The land of Gessen assigned to Jacob's family.

industrious men amongst them, make them rulers over my cattle."

Jacob before Pharao.

When at length Jacob arrived, and was conducted into the king's presence, he blessed him; and, in answer to Pharao's question concerning his age, replied: "The days of my pilgrimage are 130 years, few and evil, and they are not come up to the days of the pilgrimage of my fathers." The remaining seventeen years of his life Jacob spent in the land of Gessen, where his descendants multiplied exceedingly, and became very numerous. And when at last he found that the day of his death was drawing nigh, he called his son Joseph to him and said: "If I have found favour in thy sight, thou shalt show me this kindness and truth, not to bury me in Egypt: but I will sleep with my fathers, and thou shalt take me away out of this land, and bury me in the burying-place of my ancestors."

Jacob blesses the two sons of Joseph.

Not long afterwards, when Joseph heard that his father was failing fast, he hastened to his bedside, taking with him his two sons *Manasses* and *Ephraim.* As Joseph entered the room, the dying patriarch raised himself on his couch to welcome him. He then told him how God had appeared to him in the land of Chanaan, and had promised to give that land to him and to his seed after him for an everlasting possession. Continuing, he said: "Thy two sons, who were born to thee in the land of Egypt before I came hither to thee, shall be mine: Ephraim and Manasses shall be reputed to me as Ruben and Simeon. Bring them to me that I may bless them." And when they were brought he kissed and embraced them. Now Joseph had placed Manasses on the right hand of Jacob, and Ephraim on the left; but Jacob, crossing his hands, stretched forth his right hand and placed it upon the head of Ephraim, the younger brother, and his left on the

head of Manasses. When Joseph perceived what his father had done, he was troubled, and tried to remove his right hand from Ephraim's head, and to place it on that of Manasses. "It should not be so, my father," he said, "for this is the first-born: put thy right hand upon his head." But Jacob answered: "I know, my son, I know: and this also shall become a people, and shall be multiplied; but his younger brother shall be greater than he; and his seed shall grow into nations." He then blessed both at the same time, but set Ephraim before Manasses. To Joseph he said: "Behold I die, and God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers."

Jacob blesses all his sons.

Jacob next called together all his sons; and bidding them hearken to the last words of Israel, their father, he foretold to each what would befall his descendants.

To *Ruben* he said: "Ruben, my first-born, thou art my strength and the beginning of my sorrow; excelling in gifts, greater in command." He also told him that, on account of his having sinned with Bala, he should not inherit the privileges that usually belonged to the first birthright, viz., the *double portion*, the being *prince* or *lord* over the other brethren, and the *priesthood:* of which the double portion was given to *Joseph*, the princely office to *Juda*, and the priesthood to *Levi*.

Turning to *Simeon* and *Levi*, he said: "I will divide them in Jacob, and will scatter them in Israel." This he said, because of their cruelty and deceit in slaying Sichem, the son of Hemor, with all his people.

To *Juda* he assigned the princely office, and foretold that from him should be born the *Messias:* "*The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations.*"

He said to *Joseph:* "Joseph is a growing son and

comely to behold. The God of thy father shall be thy helper, and the Almighty shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, and with the blessings of the deep that lieth beneath. The blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers, until the desire of the everlasting hills should come."

Addressing *Benjamin*, he said: "Benjamin, a ravenous wolf, in the morning shall eat the prey, and in the evening shall divide the spoil."

Having also predicted the future destinies of his other sons, he blessed them all, and made this his dying request: "I am now going to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the double cave which is over against Mambre, in the land of Chanaan." He then drew up his feet upon the bed and died at the age of 147 years.

Jacob's death.

When Joseph saw that his father was dead, he fell upon his face, and kissing him fervently, wept. Then rising from the couch, he called his physicians, and commanded them to embalm the body. All Egypt mourned for Jacob seventy days, and after the time of mourning was expired, Joseph went to Pharao and asked permission to bury his father in the land of Chanaan, as he had desired. Pharao bade him carry out his father's instructions, and the chief officer of the king's house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, together with a great train of chariots and horsemen, accompanied the funeral. When the procession arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, which is situated near the Jordan, it halted for seven days, which were spent in much mourning and lamentation. The inhabitants of Chanaan were so impressed with the sight that they named the place "*The Mourning of Egypt.*" From Atad the sons of Jacob bore their father's remains to Hebron, and buried them by the side of Abraham and Isaac in the double cave.

Jacob's burial.

oseph's romise to rotect his rethren.

On their return into Egypt, Joseph's brethren began to fear lest he might take vengeance on them for the wrongs they had done him. They therefore sent a messenger to him to say: "I beseech thee to forget the wickedness of thy brethren, and the sin and malice they practised against thee: we also pray thee to forgive the servants of the God of thy father this wickedness." On hearing this, Joseph wept, and assured them that they need have no fear. He also added: "You thought evil against me, but God turned it into good, that He might exalt me, and might save many people." Thus did he comfort them and speak gently to them, promising to support and protect them and their children.

oseph's death.

Joseph lived to see the children of Ephraim to the third generation, and the grandchildren also of Manasses; and when at length he knew that his end was near, he said to his brethren: "God will visit you after my death, and will make you go up out of this land to the land which He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Then, having enjoined them to carry his bones with them when they should go out of Egypt, he died, B.C. 1635, at the age of 110 years, and was embalmed and laid in a coffin.

oseph a igure of our aviour.

In many circumstances of his life, Joseph was a figure of our Blessed Lord. Joseph was sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver: for thirty pieces of silver did Judas, one of the chosen disciples of our Saviour, betray his heavenly Master. Joseph, after his betrayal, saved his brethren: Jesus, after the treachery of Judas, died to save mankind. In his goodness of heart, Joseph forgave the cruel wrong done to him by his brethren: Jesus not only forgave His executioners, but offered to His eternal Father His own most precious blood for their salvation.

THE BOOK OF JOB

CHAPTER XIX

THE SUFFERINGS AND PATIENCE OF JOB

Character of Job.

THE Book of Job takes its name from the holy man of whom it treats; and, although the time when he lived is uncertain and of no great importance, a more striking or more noble pattern of virtue, particularly of patience, could not well be conceived. Some have supposed that he was contemporary with Esther, but a more probable opinion is that he was of the race of Esau, and none other than Jobab, king of Edom, mentioned in the Book of Genesis (xxxvi. 33). Though not a Jew, he was, like Melchisedech, a believer in the true God, and, after the manner of the patriarchs, was a priest and ruler in his own family. His life is a striking example to us of how the wicked sometimes prosper, while the good are afflicted. He was a man innocent, sincere, and without guile, and one who feared God and avoided sin.

His riches.

A dweller in the land of Hus, which was a part of Edom, Job was blessed by God both in his family and in his possessions. He had seven sons and three daughters, and his flocks and herds were numbered by their thousands. The Devil, enraged at seeing his great virtues, resolved to rob him not only of God's grace, but also of that happiness which he so abundantly possessed; and to this end heaped upon him, with the Divine permission, afflictions the most severe. He was not allowed, however, at first to touch his person.

On a certain day, a servant came hurrying into Job's presence with the startling intelligence: "The oxen were

ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, when the Sabeans rushed in, and, having taken all away, they slew thy servants with the sword: I alone have escaped to tell thee." Now while he was yet speaking, another came in and said: "Fire fell from heaven, and, striking the sheep and the shepherds, consumed them: I alone have escaped." A third messenger came announcing the loss of his camels, and the slaughter of his servants who were in charge of them; while yet a fourth was the bearer of tidings still more terrible: "Thy sons and daughters," he said, "were feasting in the house of their eldest brother, when a violent wind came on a sudden from the side of the desert, and shook the four corners of the house, which fell upon and killed them." Job was filled with grief, and in token of his sorrow rent his garments; yet he murmured not; but, in a spirit of perfect resignation, prostrated himself in adoration before God, saying: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord." Therefore, in all these things, continues the Sacred Text, "Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God."

Satan is permitted to afflict Job.

Thus baffled in his attempt to make the holy man blaspheme against God, Satan next sought permission to afflict him in his person, which request was granted on condition that his life should be spared. The Devil accordingly struck Job with a grievous ulcer, which covered his body from the sole of his foot even to the top of his head. In this pitiable condition he maintained the greatest patience; and going out of his house sat upon a dunghill, and scraped away the corrupt matter with a potsherd. Seeing him thus occupied, his wife stood before him chiding him for his simplicity, and bidding him curse God, and die. He merely answered her by saying: "Thou hast spoken like

Job is afflicted with an ulcer.

one of the foolish women. If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" Again Job sinned not by his words.

His false friends.

Three of his friends, Eliphaz, Baldad, and Sophar, having heard of the misfortunes that had befallen him, came together to condole with him in his sorrow; but when they saw his great sufferings, they rent their garments and shed tears of pity, while their grief was too great for utterance. For seven days they remained with him thus, till at last Eliphaz, believing that inflictions such as these must be in punishment of some secret crime, addressed him in these words: "If we begin to speak with thee, perhaps thou wilt take it ill, but who can withhold the words he hath conceived? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or when were the just destroyed? On the contrary, I have seen those who work iniquity, and sow sorrows, and reap them, perishing by the blast of God, and consumed by the spirit of His wrath: nothing upon earth is done without a cause, and sorrow doth not spring out of the ground. Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and turn to some of the saints."

Job is reproved by Baldad and Sophar.

For a time, Job listened in silence to these reproaches, but at length replied: "Teach me, and I will hold my peace: and if I have been ignorant of anything, instruct me. Why have you detracted the words of truth, whereas there is none of you that can reprove me? You dress up speeches only to rebuke; you rush in upon the fatherless, and endeavour to overthrow your friend." Baldad, under pretence of defending the justice of God, also accused Job, and exhorted him to repentance; and in like manner did Sophar, who, moreover, reproved him for justifying himself.

Job complained of the cruelty of his friends, but consoled himself by his unshaken faith in the coming of the Messias and in a future resurrection: "I know," he

said, "that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom" (Job xix. 25-27).

Job's belief in the coming of the Messias.

After the three men had ceased reproaching Job, there came a fourth, named Eliu, who blamed him for asserting his own innocence, and even went so far as to charge him with blasphemy. At length God Himself interposed. He first consoled His servant, then turned in indignation against the false friends, and thus addressed Eliphaz: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy friends, because you have not spoken the thing that is right before Me, as My servant Job hath. Take unto you, therefore, seven oxen, and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust. He shall pray for you: his face I will accept, that folly be not imputed to you." They did as God commanded, and at the prayer of Job their fault was pardoned.

God interposes in behalf of His servant.

Having allowed His servant to be thus sorely tried, and having Himself interposed to vindicate his innocence, God again blessed him with health, and gave him riches beyond what he had possessed before. Other sons and daughters were born to him, equalling in number those whom he had lost, and he lived to see his children's children to the fourth generation.

Job is again blessed with children and with riches.

In the life of holy Job we have manifested to us the restless endeavours of Satan against the servants of God. We see, moreover, that he can do nothing without the permission of God, who does not allow him to tempt them above their strength, but assists them by His Divine grace in such a manner that the vain efforts of the enemy only serve to illustrate their virtue and to increase their merit.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Exodus is the name given to the second Book of Moses. The word Exodus means *a going out* or *departure,* and the Book contains the history of the *departure* of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. Exodus covers a period of 145 years, from the death of Joseph to the beginning of the second year after the Israelites had been delivered out of the hands of Pharao, B.C. 1635 to B.C. 1491.

CHAPTER XX

THE EGYPTIAN CAPTIVITY— BIRTH AND MISSION OF MOSES, B.C. 1571 TO B.C. 1491

Oppression of the people of Israel.

After the death of Joseph and his brethren, the children of Israel increased exceedingly, and soon became very numerous in the land. Now it came to pass that there arose a king over Egypt who, unmindful of Joseph's services to his country, said to his people: "Behold the people of the children of Israel are numerous and stronger than we. Come, let us oppress them, lest they multiply, and, if any war shall arise against us, join our enemies, and having overcome us, depart out of the land." He accordingly set over them task-masters, cruel like himself, who loaded them with heavy burdens, and caused them to toil as slaves in the public works. Their lives were made bitter by ceaseless labour in the clay-pits, in making bricks, and by all manner of hard service; but the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and increased. When Pharao found that this plan for exterminating them was of no avail, he had recourse to a more cruel method still, and fixed on the barbarous and inhuman design of causing all the male children to be killed as soon as they were born. He therefore called the midwives to him, and

gave orders that when a Hebrew child was born, they should kill it if it was a boy. But even this dark scheme was not destined to succeed, as the midwives, who were God-fearing women, found some excuse for not carrying out Pharao's commands. Filled with anger at being thus defeated in his wicked purpose, the king next published a decree that all the new-born sons of the Hebrews should be cast into the river Nile, but that the daughters should be saved.

Aaron and his sister Miriam.

Before the publication of this cruel edict, *Amram*, the grandson of Levi, had married *Jochabed*, a woman of the same tribe, and at this time had two children, a son named Aaron, and a daughter Miriam or Mary. Their next child was a son; and the mother, prompted by her great love for the babe, and urged, too, by his exceeding beauty, succeeded in concealing him for three months. When she found it no longer possible to keep his birth a secret, she made a basket of bulrushes, and smearing the inside with pitch to keep out the water, laid her child gently in this strange cradle, and carried it down to the banks of the Nile. Having placed the basket with its precious burden among the sedges by the brink of the water, she stationed Miriam a short distance away to see what might befall. It so chanced that Pharao's daughter came to bathe at the same spot, accompanied by her maids; and happening to perceive the basket, she ordered one of them to fetch it to her, being curious to know what it might contain. On opening it, she was astonished to find an infant crying; and moved with compassion for the poor weakling, she said: "This is one of the babes of the Hebrews"; and resolved to rear it as her own. In the meantime the timid Miriam had approached close to the wondering group, anxious to hear what was said; and when she saw that the princess's feelings were moved

Moses saved from the Nile.

towards the child, she eagerly asked if she might call a Hebrew woman to nurse it. Having obtained permission, she at once hastened to her mother, to whom she told all that had come to pass, and immediately the two hastened to the spot. What was the mother's secret delight at receiving her child again, with the joyful request that she would act towards it as its nurse! When the boy was old enough, she brought him to the princess, who treated him as her own son, and called his name Moses, that is, *saved from the water*.

Moses brought up in Pharao's palace.

Thus miraculously preserved amid the universal destruction of the sons of the Hebrews, Moses was brought up in the royal palace as the adopted son of Pharao's daughter, and as such was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and became versed in the sciences for which Egypt was then so famous.

Flight of Moses.

Although raised in dignity above all his brethren, yet he did not forget the cruel sufferings to which they were daily exposed. On a certain occasion, when visiting them in the land of Gessen, he saw an Egyptian cruelly beating one of the Hebrews, and was filled with indignation at the sight. Now by the laws of Egypt, every person was required to protect the oppressed, or, if unable to do so, was bound to call in the aid of a magistrate. Moses looked this way and that to see if there was any help near, but finding none, he struck the Egyptian and killed him on the spot. He then took the dead body and buried it in the sand, never thinking but that the deed would remain a secret. On going out next day, he found two Hebrews quarrelling, and said to the wrong-doer: "Why strikest thou thy neighbour?" The man replied: "Who hath appointed thee prince and judge over us? Wilt thou kill me as thou didst yesterday kill the Egyptian?" Moses was

filled with surprise on finding that his act was thus publicly known; and when he learnt that it had come to Pharao's ear, and that the king sought his life, he determined to flee without delay. Directing his course in a south-easterly direction, he came into the land of Madian, or the Peninsula of Sinai, a country in Arabia, situated at the head of the Red Sea, and peopled by the posterity of Madian, the son of Abraham and Cetura.

His residence in Madian.

One day as Moses sat down beside a well, the seven daughters of Jethro or Raguel, the priest of Madian, who served the true God, approached to water their flocks, but were rudely driven away by some Arabian shepherds. Moses rose up at once in defence of the maidens, and helped them to draw water. Surprised to find that they returned that day earlier than was their custom, their father asked: "Why are ye come sooner than usual?" They answered: "A man of Egypt delivered us from the hands of the shepherds; and he drew water also with us, and gave the sheep to drink." "Where is he?" he inquired: "why have you let the man go? Call him that he may eat bread." When Moses came, he was received with great kindness, and agreed to remain with Jethro and tend his flocks. Here in quiet seclusion he spent the next forty years of his life, and having married Sephora, one of Jethro's daughters, he became the father of two sons, Gersam and Eliezer.

In the meantime the king from whom Moses had fled died. But so far were the sufferings of the Israelites from being abated that their oppression became more and more severe. In their anguish, they cried to God, who had pity on them, and heard their groaning, remembering the covenant which He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

While Moses on one occasion was in charge of the flocks of his father-in-law, he drove them to the inner

parts of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, Horeb—a mountain so close to Mount Sinai, that it is said the shadow of the latter reaches it when the sun rises. Here his attention was attracted by a wonderful sight. The Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and Moses saw that the bush was on fire without being consumed. Struck with astonishment, he said to himself: "I will go and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When he approached, the voice of the Lord was heard calling to him from amidst the flames: "Moses, Moses!" He answered: "Here I am." God said to him: "Come not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses was filled with awe, and hid his face, for he durst not look upon God. The voice of God continued: "I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry; and knowing their sorrow, I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, into a land that floweth with milk and honey. I will send thee to Pharao, that thou mayest bring forth My people out of Egypt." Moses, full of humility, and knowing how unfit he was for undertaking so great a charge, said to God: "Who am I that I should go to Pharao, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" God said to him: "I will be with thee, and this thou shalt have for a sign that I have sent thee: When thou shalt have brought My people out of Egypt, thou shalt offer sacrifice upon this mountain." Moses said: "Lo I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them: 'The God of your fathers hath sent me to you.' If they shall say to me: 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses: "I AM WHO AM. Thus shalt thou say

The burning bush.

to the children of Israel: 'HE WHO IS hath sent me to you!'" Thus did God reveal Himself to Moses under the title of JEHOVAH, the *essence—Being* itself, eternal, self-existent, independent, infinite, without beginning, end, or change, and the source of all other beings: "the ever I AM," with whom "all is an *eternal present*."

Moses' mission o Pharao.

The Lord next bade Moses go and gather together the ancients of Israel, and make known to them the instructions he had received. He told him that they would hear his voice, and that he and they were to go to the king of Egypt and say to him: "The Lord God of the Hebrews hath called us; we will go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice unto the Lord our God." "I know," continued Almighty God, "that the king of Egypt will not let you go but by a mighty hand; for I will stretch forth My hand, and will strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst of them: after these he will let you go. And when you shall go forth, you shall not depart empty; but every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her that is in her house, vessels of silver and of gold, and raiment; and you shall put them on your sons and daughters, and shall spoil Egypt." Moses answered: "They will not believe me, nor hear my voice, but will say: 'The Lord hath not appeared to thee.'" Then God said to him: "What is that thou holdest in thy hand?" He answered: "A rod." God said: "Cast it down upon the ground." He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent, so that Moses in alarm fled from it. Then the Lord said to him: "Put out thy hand and take it by the tail." He stretched forth his hand and took hold of it, and it was turned into a rod. And the Lord said again: "Put thy hand into thy bosom." And after he had done so, he brought it forth leprous as snow. God said to him: "Put back thy hand into thy bosom." He put it back,

and brought it out again, and it was like the other flesh. Then God said: "If they will not believe thee, nor pay heed to the former sign, they will believe the latter sign. But if they will not even regard these two signs, nor hear thy voice, take of the river water, and pour it out upon the dry land, and whatever thou drawest out of the river shall be turned into blood."

He pleads his unfitness for the task.

Moses, still overwhelmed by the thought of the magnitude of his mission, and of his inability to perform so great a work, next pleaded his want of eloquence and slowness of tongue. The Lord said to him: "Who made man's mouth? Did not I? Go therefore, and I will be in thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak." Even yet Moses held back, and begged that another might be sent in his stead. Thereupon the Lord was angry with him and said: "Aaron the Levite is thy brother, and I know that he is eloquent: behold he cometh forth to meet thee, and seeing thee, shall be glad at heart. Speak to him, and put My words in his mouth: and I will be in thy mouth, and in his, and will show you what you must do. He shall speak in thy stead to the people." God then commanded Moses to take the rod wherewith he should do the signs, and, with Aaron as his spokesman, go and explain His words to the people.

Moses returns to Egypt.

Without further delay, Moses rose up and returned to Jethro; and having declared his intention of once more visiting his native land, he took his wife and his sons and went into Egypt, carrying the rod of God in his hand. As God had foretold, he was met by Aaron his brother; and after he had explained to him the commands of God, they assembled the ancients of Israel and wrought the signs in sight of all the people. The people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and had looked upon their affliction, they fell down and adored.

PART III

FROM THE DELIVERY OF THE HEBREWS OUT OF EGYPT TO THE DEATH OF MOSES

B.C. 1491 TO B.C. 1451

CHAPTER XXI

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT, B.C. 1491

The first appeal of Moses and Aaron to Pharao.

Moses and Aaron next presented themselves before Pharao, and sought permission for the Hebrews to go out a three days' journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifice, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded. But he answered: "Who is the Lord, that I should hear His voice, and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. Why do you, Moses and Aaron, draw off the people from their works? Get you gone to your burdens." He then commanded the overseers of the works and the task-masters to lay new burdens upon the Hebrews. Hitherto, the straw which had to be mixed with the clay in making bricks had been provided for them, but now the supply was to be stopped, the Israelites being required to gather it for themselves: yet did the task-masters require the usual number of bricks. Thus, while some continued at the works, others went about the fields to gather up every grain of chaff and piece of straw that they could find.

Heavier burdens laid upon the Hebrews.

The people toiled and groaned under the weight of their burdens; and when, in spite of all their exertions, they were unable to supply the requisite number of bricks, the overseers of the works thus cruelly urged them: "Fulfil your work every

day as before you were wont to do, when straw was given you." Then they that were over the works of the children of Israel were scourged by Pharao's task-masters, who demanded: "Why have you not made up the task of bricks both yesterday and to-day, as before?" After that, the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharao: "Why dealest thou so with thy servants? Straw is not given us, and bricks are required of us as before: behold we thy servants are beaten with whips, and thy people are dealt with unjustly." Pharao turned a deaf ear to their complaints, and dismissed them from his presence with these bitter taunts: "You are idle, and therefore you say: 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.'"

The Hebrews turn against Moses and Aaron.

Finding their petition rejected by Pharao, they now turned against Moses and Aaron, and accused them of having been the cause of the evils under which they were labouring. Moses was filled with distress for their sufferings, and besought God, saying: "Lord, why hast Thou afflicted this people? Wherefore hast Thou sent me? For since the time that I went in to Pharao to speak in Thy name, he hath afflicted Thy people, and Thou hast not delivered them." The Lord said to him: "Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharao: for by a mighty hand shall he let them go. I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel wherewith the Egyptians have oppressed them, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord who will bring you out of the work-prison of the Egyptians, and will deliver you from bondage, and redeem you with a high arm and great judgments. And I will take you to Myself for My people: I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God'" Moses told this to the children of Israel, but they did not hearken to him because of their anguish of spirit.

The second appeal of Moses and Aaron to Pharao.

God then bade Moses and Aaron go a *second time* and demand the deliverance of His people. Being come before the king, they were asked for a sign as a proof of their mission; whereupon Moses, in presence of Pharao and his courtiers, told Aaron to cast down his rod. Aaron did so, and immediately it was changed into a serpent. When Pharao saw this, he sent for the wise men and the magicians of his court, and they also threw down their rods, which likewise became serpents. Pharao's heart was hardened; and although Aaron's rod swallowed up those of the magicians, he refused to be convinced, and would not let the people go. Hitherto God's judgments had been withheld from Pharao, but now punishments and plagues were to wring from him that consent which had been denied to words and signs.

The first plague, the Plague of Blood.

The First Plague which God sent upon Egypt was *The Plague of Blood.* On the banks of the Nile, Pharao was met by Moses, who said to him: "The Lord God of the Hebrews sent me to thee, saying: 'Let My people go to sacrifice to Me in the desert': and hitherto thou wouldst not hear. Thus saith the Lord: 'In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord': behold I will strike the water of the river with the rod in my hand, and it shall be turned into blood. And the fishes that are in the river shall die, and the waters shall be corrupted, and the Egyptians shall be afflicted when they drink the water of the river." Moses and Aaron did as God had commanded, and the water of the rivers and streams and pools, and all the ponds of waters, were turned into blood; and blood was in all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and of stone. The river corrupted, the fishes that were in the river died, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water thereof. This miracle lasted *seven days*, during which

time the Egyptians obtained water by digging wells round about the river. The king's magicians once more successfully imitated the wonders performed by Moses, and again Pharao hardened his heart, and would not let the Israelites go.

The second plague, the Plague of Frogs.

The Second Plague by which God sought to win Pharao's consent was *The Plague of Frogs.* After seven days were ended, the Lord bade Moses say to the king: "If thou wilt not let the people go, behold I will strike all thy coasts with frogs. The river shall bring forth an abundance of frogs, which shall come up and enter into thy house, and thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the houses of thy servants, and to thy people, and into thy ovens, and into the remains of thy meats." Directed by God, Aaron stretched forth his hand upon the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the land. Again did the magicians, by their enchantments, perform a similar wonder, and caused frogs to appear upon the land of Egypt; but when they were unable to take them away, Pharao called Moses and Aaron, and said to them: "Pray ye to the Lord to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord." That the king might not be able to attribute their departure to natural causes, and that he might learn how powerful was the God of the Hebrews, Moses asked him to assign a time for their removal. He willingly consented, and appointed the next day. At the prayer of Moses, the frogs died where they were, whether in the houses, or in the fields, or in the villages; and when they were gathered together into immense heaps, the air was filled with the stench of their corruption. Yet no sooner was the plague removed than the king again hardened his heart, and refused to keep his promise.

The Third Plague devised by God to humble the proud king was *The Plague of Sciniphs*—small flying insects, very

troublesome both to men and beasts. At the command of God, Aaron stretched forth his hand, holding the rod; and when he had struck the dust of the earth there came sciniphs on men and beasts. Even the very dust was turned into sciniphs through all the land of Egypt. When the magicians had tried to perform a like wonder, and had failed, they were reluctantly compelled to acknowledge their inability to imitate this miracle, and said to the king: "This is the finger of God." Still did Pharao refuse to yield.

The third plague, the Plague of Sciniphs.

The Fourth Plague was *The Plague of Flies.* God next commanded Moses to go early in the morning to meet Pharao on his way to the river, and say to him: "Thus saith the Lord God: 'Let My people go to sacrifice to Me. But if thou wilt not let them go, behold I will send in upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy houses, all manner of flies: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with flies of divers kinds, and the whole land wherein they shall be. And I will make the land of Gessen wonderful in that day, so that flies shall not be there: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between My people and thy people': to-morrow shall this sign be." God's threat was carried out to the very letter; and next day there appeared countless swarms of flies, which settled on men and beasts throughout all the land of Egypt, but the Hebrews who dwelt in Gessen were entirely free from them. So intolerable was the pain caused by their sting, and so unbearable the discomfort, that Pharao's heart began to relent, and calling Moses and Aaron, he said to them: "Go and sacrifice to your God in this land." Moses replied: "It cannot be so: for we shall sacrifice the abominations*

The fourth plague, the Plague of Flies.

* Such as oxen and rams which the Egyptians worshipped, and which the Scriptures call abominations as being false gods.

of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: now if we kill in presence of the Egyptians those things which they worship, they will stone us. We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and will sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He commanded us." The king said: "I will let you go to the Lord your God in the wilderness, but go no farther: pray for me." Moses replied: "I will go out from thee, and will pray to the Lord; and the flies shall depart from Pharao, and from his servants, and from his people to-morrow: but do not deceive any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice." Moses prayed for the king; and at his prayer the flies were taken away from the Egyptians, so that there was not left so much as one. Immediately, unmindful of the solemn promise he had made, Pharao hardened his heart, and would not suffer the Hebrews to depart.

The Fifth Plague with which God punished Pharao was *The Plague of the Murrain* amongst the cattle of Egypt. Going to the king, Moses declared: "If thou wilt not let the people go, behold a grievous murrain shall be upon thy horses, and asses, and camels, and oxen, and sheep, and the Lord will make a wonderful difference between the possessions of Israel and those of the Egyptians: nothing at all shall die of those things that belong to the children of Israel." As Moses had foretold, so did it happen next day. Great numbers of the beasts of the Egyptians died, but not one of those that belonged to the children of Israel. Pharao sent to see if there was anything dead of that which Israel possessed; but, although he found that the cattle of the Israelites had not suffered, he still refused to let the people go.

The fifth plague, the Plague of the Murrain.

The Sixth Plague came in the shape of *Boils and Blains*, which affected not only the Egyptians themselves, but their cattle also. In obedience to the Divine command,

The sixth plague, the Plague of Boils and Blains.

Moses and Aaron took ashes, which they sprinkled in the air before Pharao, and there came boils with swelling blains on men and beasts alike; neither could the magicians stand before Pharao for the boils that were upon them. Still Pharao would not yield.

The seventh plague, the Plague of Hail.

The Seventh Plague foretold by Moses was *The Plague of Hail.* The Lord said to him: "Stretch forth thy hand towards heaven, that there may be hail in the whole land of Egypt upon men, and upon beasts, and upon every herb of the field." After warning Pharao to gather his men and cattle into shelter, Moses stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightnings running along the ground; and the hail and fire mixed with it drove on together. So great, too, was the hail that such had not been seen in Egypt before. All things that were left in the fields, and all those who had disregarded the admonition of Moses, were destroyed, while the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke the trees of the country. Only in the land of Gessen, where the children of Israel were, the hail fell not. Pharao was so moved that he called Moses and Aaron, and in his fear exclaimed: "I have sinned this time also, the Lord is just: I and my people are wicked. Pray ye to the Lord that the thunderings of God and the hail may cease, that I may let you go, and that you may stay here no longer." Moses yielded to his prayer; but when Pharao saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders had ceased, he again grew hardened in his heart, and refused to let the people of Israel go as the Lord had commanded.

The Eighth Plague which the unyielding Pharao brought upon his country was *The Plague of Locusts.* So terrified were the Egyptians by what had already happened to them, and so fearful were they of further suffering, that

the courtiers even ventured to remonstrate with the king on the folly of opposing the Divine will any longer. Pharao so far relented as to promise to let the men go to sacrifice in the wilderness, if only their wives and children should be allowed to remain behind. Moses would not consent to this; and as the king continued obstinate, he stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt. Thereupon, the Lord brought a burning wind all that day and night; and when the next morning dawned, there appeared great swarms of locusts which came over the whole land, and on all the coasts of the Egyptians. The grass of the earth was devoured, whatever fruits the hail had left on the trees were destroyed, and in all Egypt there remained nothing that was green on the trees, or of the herbs of the earth. In haste Pharao again sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them: "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you: but now forgive me my sin this time also, and pray to the Lord your God to take away from me this death." Moses prayed for the king, and immediately there arose a strong wind from the west, which took away the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. But their removal only served to harden the king, and again he refused to allow the Hebrews to go.

The eighth plague, the Plague of Locusts.

The Ninth Plague was *The Plague of Darkness.* Moses, instructed by God, stretched forth his hand towards heaven, and there came horrible darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days, a darkness so thick that it might even be felt. No man saw his brother, nor moved out of the place where the darkness had overtaken him; but where the children of Israel dwelt there was light. In great alarm Pharao commanded Moses and Aaron to go and sacrifice to the Lord, but to leave their sheep and herds behind. Moses replied: "All the flocks shall go with us, for they

The ninth plague, the Plague of Darkness.

are necessary for the service of the Lord our God, especially as we know not what must be offered till we come to the very place." But Pharao, hardening his heart, would not let them go, and said to Moses: "Get thee from me, and beware thou see not my face any more: in what day soever thou shalt come in my sight, thou shalt die." Moses answered: "So shall it be as thou hast spoken; I will not see thy face any more."

CHAPTER XXII

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN, B.C. 1491

The tenth plague, the Death of the First-born.

The Tenth Plague, The Death of the First-born, a plague more fatal and more terrible than any that had gone before, was destined to win from the hitherto unwilling Pharao an eager submission to what he had before so obstinately refused. As a result of this terrible scourge, the Israelites were not merely to receive permission to depart, but were even to be urged by the Egyptians to go with all possible speed.

The institution of the Pasch or Passover.

The Lord again appeared to Moses and said: "Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pharao and Egypt, and after that he shall let you go, and thrust you out. Therefore thou shalt tell all the people, that every man ask of his friend, and every woman of her neighbour, vessels of silver and of gold. At midnight I will enter into Egypt, and every first-born in the land of the Egyptians shall die, from the first-born of Pharao, who sitteth on his throne, even to the first-born of the handmaid that is at the mill, and all the first-born of beasts; and there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as neither hath been before, nor shall be hereafter. But with all the children of Israel there shall not a dog make the least noise, from man even to

beast, that you may know how wonderful a difference the Lord maketh between the Egyptians and Israel. This month (*Nisan*) shall be to you the beginning of months; it shall be the first in the months of the year. On the tenth day of this month, let every man take a lamb by families and houses; but if the number be less than may suffice to eat it, he shall take unto him his neighbour. The lamb shall be without blemish, a male, of one year; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice it in the evening. The blood of the lamb they shall take and sprinkle upon both the side-posts and on the upper door-posts of the houses wherein they shall eat it. They shall roast the flesh that same night at the fire, and eat it with unleavened bread and wild lettuce; neither shall there be anything left until morning. If there be anything left, you shall burn it with fire. You shall have your loins girt, and shoes on your feet, holding staves in your hands, and you shall eat in haste; for it is the Phase (that is, the Passage) of the Lord. And I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and will kill every first-born in Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments; I am the Lord. The blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be, and I shall see the blood, and shall *pass over* you. This day shall be for a memorial to you, and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread: in the first day there shall be no leaven in your houses; whosoever shall eat anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall perish out of Israel."

He who had not a lamb was to sacrifice a kid; and all the same rites and ceremonies were to be used with the one as with the other, and in neither case was a bone to be broken.

Having called together the ancients of the children of Israel, Moses related to them all that the Lord had commanded; and when these things were made known to the people, they bowed down and adored; then going forth, they faithfully carried out all the instructions given by God to Moses and Aaron.

The death of the first-born.

At midnight after the fourteenth day, the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, and slew the first-born in every house that was not sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. A loud cry of anguish arose throughout the land, for there was not a house wherein there lay not one dead. Filled with horror at the death of his eldest son, and hearing the cry of woe that prevailed on every side, Pharao arose in the darkness of the night, and sending for Moses and Aaron, besought them to depart at once from among his people. "Go," said he, "go, sacrifice to the Lord as you say. Your sheep and herds take along with you as you demanded, and departing, bless me." The Egyptians now pressed upon the Israelites to go forth with all speed out of their land, lest they too should die. The vessels of gold and silver, which the Israelites, by the command of Moses, asked of them, they gladly gave, and along with these offered them their most costly raiment.

The Exodus.

Thus richly supplied, the children of Israel set out, to the number of 600,000 men, besides women and children; and carrying with them the bones of Joseph, turned their steps in the direction of *Socoth* (*tents*). The exodus of the Israelites took place 215 years from Jacob's going down with his family into Egypt, or 430 years after the departure of Abraham from Haran in his 75th year.

The Paschal Lamb is a figure of Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Lamb of God, who, having redeemed us by His death, condescends to feed us with Himself in the

Blessed Eucharist. To fulfil this figure, Christ substituted His own body, and making His apostles priests, ordered them to continue this sacrifice to the end of time. He came to Jerusalem on the *tenth* day of Nisan (*March to April*), on Sunday, gave Himself to His disciples on the evening of the *fourteenth*, and died at noon on the *fifteenth*. A striking figure of our redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ is the sprinkling of the door-post of the Israelites with the blood of the Paschal Lamb that they might be delivered from the sword of the destroying angel.

The Paschal Lamb a figure of the Immaculate Lamb of God.

From the fact that the Paschal Lamb had to be eaten with unleavened bread, it appears that our Saviour made use of unleavened bread in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, which took place on the evening of the Paschal Solemnity; for at that time there was no leavened bread to be found in Israel.

To commemorate the death of the first-born, Almighty God commanded the Israelites henceforth to consecrate to Him the first-born male of man and beast. Every first-born of man must be redeemed with a price. It was for this reason that our Lord was presented in the Temple by His Mother (Luke ii. 23). Of animals, those that were impure were to be redeemed or killed; those that were pure, such as the offspring of sheep and cattle, were to be offered in sacrifice.

A memorial of the Exodus.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JOURNEY FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

Marching from Socoth, the Israelites directed their steps towards Etham, which is situated at the edge of the wilderness; and, to show the way, the Lord went before them by

day in a Pillar of Cloud, and by night in a Pillar of Fire.

March to the Red Sea.

From Etham they proceeded to Phihahiroth, between Magdal and Beelsephon; and there, on the border of the Red Sea, they encamped.

Pharao pursues the Israelites.

Meanwhile, Pharao began to repent that he had let the people go; and hearing, after three days, that they were still near the sea, and thinking that they would be thus hemmed in and cut off from all escape, he got ready his horsemen and chariots, and set out in pursuit. At the sight of the Egyptian hosts, the children of Israel abandoned themselves to despair, and in the wildest confusion pressed round Moses, upbraiding him for his cruelty in having brought them out into the wilderness to die. But he said to them: "Fear not: stand and see the great wonders of the Lord which He will do this day; for the Egyptians whom you see now, you shall see no more for ever. The Lord will fight for you."

The Red Sea triumph.

The angel of the Lord who went before the Israelites in the Pillar of Cloud now passed to their rear, and thus prevented the Egyptians from coming too close upon them. To the Egyptians it was a dark cloud; but it enlightened the night to the Israelites, and shone on them with great brightness. At the same time Almighty God bade Moses lift up his rod, and stretch forth his hand over the sea and divide it, that the children of Israel might go across on dry ground. He did so; and immediately the Lord sent a burning wind which blew all night and divided the water so that it became as a wall on the right hand and on the left, while in the midst there was left a dry passage which stretched to the opposite shore. Through this the Israelites advanced in long procession, and passed in safety to the further side. Pharao, in his eagerness to come up with them, also rushed with all his army into this fatal pass. But when the morning watch was come, behold the Lord looked upon

the Egyptian army through the Pillar of Fire and of Cloud, and overthrew the wheels of their chariots, thus causing the greatest disorder in their ranks. All became exceedingly alarmed for their safety, and said to one another: "Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against us." Then the Lord said to Moses: "Stretch forth thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and horsemen." He obeyed; and the waters began to return so quickly to their former place, that the Egyptians, in spite of their frantic endeavours to escape, were swallowed up by the waves. Pharao was drowned, and all those who had come with him, and there did not so much as one remain. Thus did the Lord deliver Israel in that day out of the hands of the Egyptians.

Canticle of Moses.

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this canticle to the Lord: "Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified: the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become salvation to me: He is my God, and I will glorify Him: the God of my father, and I will exalt Him. Thy right hand, O Lord, is magnified in strength: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath slain the enemy. Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord? Who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders? In Thy mercy Thou hast been a leader to the people which Thou hast redeemed, and in Thy strength Thou hast carried them to Thy holy habitation. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." The song was begun by Mary the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, who went forth, followed by the rest of the women, dancing and sounding their timbrels.

From the Red Sea Moses led the Israelites into the wilderness of Sur, where they marched three days without

finding water. At length they came upon abundance of water; yet so bitter did they find it, that they could not drink it, whereupon Moses called the place Mara (*bitterness*). Here the people murmured against him and asked: "What shall we drink?" In his distress, Moses turned to the Lord, who commanded him to cast a tree into the waters, and straightway they were sweetened, so that the people could drink. At *Mara*, God renewed His promise to Israel, saying: "If thou wilt hear the voice of thy God, and do what is right before Him, and obey His commandments, and keep all His precepts, none of the evils that I laid upon Egypt will I bring upon thee: for I am the Lord thy Healer."

The waters of Mara.

The children of Israel next came to the oasis of Elim, situated to the north-west of Sinai, where there were twelve fountains and seventy palm-trees, and they encamped by the waters. Setting forward from Elim, they came into the desert of *Sin*, which is between Elim and Sinai. It was now the fifteenth day of the second month from their coming out of the land of Egypt. When the supply of bread which they had brought with them from Egypt was at length exhausted, they again murmured against Moses and Aaron, and exclaimed: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat over the flesh-pots and ate bread to the full. Why have you brought us into this desert to destroy all the multitude with famine?" The Lord heard their murmur, and said to Moses: "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth and gather what is sufficient for every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law or not." Moses and Aaron said to the children of Israel: "In the evening you shall know that the Lord hath brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you

The people murmur for want of food.

shall see the glory of the Lord, for He hath heard your murmurings: but as for us, what are we that you mutter against us? Your murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord."

God sends them quails and manna.

That same evening the Lord sent into the camp a dense flight of quails, of which the people killed as many as they chose; and on the following morning there appeared upon the ground a small round substance, white and crisp, which at first sight seemed to resemble hoar-frost. When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, "*Manhu?*" which signifies "*What is this?*" for they knew not what it was. Moses said to them: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. Let every one gather of it as much as is enough to eat, and let no man leave thereof till the morning." Now many there were who disregarded the command of Moses, and kept some till the following day, when, to their surprise, they found that it was corrupt and utterly unfit for food; whereupon Moses was angry with them, and upbraided them for their disobedience. Each morning, before sunrise, everyone was required to gather as much of the manna as would suffice for the day; for, after the sun grew hot, what was left on the ground melted away. On the sixth day, however, every man was required to gather double the usual quantity, for on the seventh day, or the Sabbath, no manna was to be found. Moses said to the people: "To-morrow is the rest of the Sabbath, sanctified to the Lord. Whatsoever work is to be done, do it, and the meats that are to be dressed, dress them, and whatsoever shall remain, lay it up until the morning." The people did as Moses commanded; and the manna did not putrify, but remained sound and sweet throughout the seventh day. At the command of God, Moses bade Aaron take a vessel and put manna into it, as much as a gomor*

* A gomor = nearly 7 pints

could hold, and lay it up before the Lord, to be preserved unto future generations, that they might remember the bread wherewith the Lord had fed them in the wilderness, when they were brought forth out of the land of Egypt. Before the Ark was made, Aaron put the vessel in the tabernacle, where the Israelites met to pray. For *forty years* did the children of Israel eat manna, until, arriving on the borders of Chanaan, they came to a habitable land.

The Scripture calls manna *the Bread of Angels.* It was of such a quality that those who ate of it could desire nothing better if they stood in need of food. We are told that it filled the mouth of God's servants with the most delightful tastes. Whatever a man gathered he had only a gomor full, and this sufficed for young and old, sick and healthy. As we have already seen, if any was kept over night it became corrupt, except that which was reserved for the Sabbath, and that which was preserved in the Ark for several hundreds of years. Yet this wonderful bread, this miraculous food, with which the children of Israel were nourished and supported during their sojourning in the wilderness, was only a *figure* of that which Jesus Christ promised to give us, the *Bread of Life* which we receive in the *Blessed Sacrament* for the food and nourishment of our souls, during the time of our mortal pilgrimage, till we come to our eternal home, the true land of promise.

The manna a figure of the Blessed Sacrament.

Setting forward from the desert of Sin, the Israelites next came to a place called *Raphidim*, where there was no water for the people to drink. Here again they murmured against Moses, and angrily demanded: "Why didst thou make us go forth out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our beasts with thirst?" Moses cried to the Lord: "What shall I do to this people? Yet a little more and they will stone me." The Lord answered him: "Go before the people, and take with

The people murmur for want of water.

thee of the ancients of Israel: and take in thy hand the rod wherewith thou didst strike the river. Behold I will stand there before thee, upon the rock Horeb; and thou shalt strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." Moses obeyed, and immediately water gushed forth, so that the people drank and were satisfied; but because of the chiding of the people of Israel, and because there they tempted the Lord, saying: "*Is the Lord among us or not?*" he called the name of that place *Temptation.*

The battle with the Amalecites.

While still encamped at Raphidim, the Israelites were attacked by *Amalec* and his people, descendants of Eliphaz, the eldest son of Esau. Moses at once called Josue (*Saviour*), and bade him choose out the most courageous of the people and march against Amalec. With a select body of men, Josue accordingly marched forth to battle, while Moses, with the rod of God in his hand, and accompanied by Aaron and Hur, went to the top of a neighbouring hill to pray for the success of the Israelites. Here, with arms extended in the form of a cross, Moses prayed; and so long as his hands remained uplifted, Israel prevailed; but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame. When at length his hands grew heavy from weariness, Aaron and Hur put under him a stone on which he might sit; and standing one on each side of him, they held up his arms until sunset, by which time the Amalecites were put to rout, and the Israelites returned to the camp victorious. A record of this victory was, by God's command, to be handed down from generation to generation: "For," said He, "I will destroy the memory of Amalec from under heaven." On the site of the battle Moses built an altar, and called the place *The Lord my exaltation.*

When Jethro, the priest of Madian, and father-in-law of Moses, heard of all the things which God had done for the

Israelites, and that He had brought them out of Egypt, he took Sephora, the wife of Moses, and her two sons, Gersam and Eliezer, and came with them into the desert to Moses, where he was camped by the mountain of God. Moses went out to meet them; and after they had saluted one another with words of peace, he told Jethro all that had happened to Pharao and the Egyptians. He also recounted the trials the Israelites had undergone in their journey, and how the Lord had delivered them; whereupon Jethro rejoiced with him, and said: "Blessed is the Lord who hath delivered His people out of the land of Egypt: now I know that the Lord is great above all gods." Jethro then offered holocausts and sacrifices to God, and Aaron and all the ancients of Israel came to join with him in the sacrificial feast.

ethro's visit o Moses.

Next day Moses sat to judge the people, and was occupied from morning till night settling the disputes that had arisen among them. Jethro, seeing this, said to Moses: "What is this that thou dost among the people? Why sittest thou alone, and all the people wait from morning till night? The thing thou dost is not good: thou art spent with foolish labour, and the business is above thy strength. But hear my words and counsels, and God shall be with thee. Let thy duty to the people be in those things that pertain to God, in showing them the ceremonies, and the manner of worshipping, and the way wherein they ought to walk, and the work that they ought to do. But provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice, and appoint of them rulers of *thousands*, and of *hundreds*, and of *fifties*, and of *tens*, who may judge the people at all times. When any great matter shall befall, let them refer it to thee, and let them judge the lesser matters only, that so it may be lighter for thee, the burden being shared out unto others. If thou

thro's counsel Moses.

dost this, thou shalt fulfil the commandment of God, and all the people shall return to their places with peace." These wise suggestions Moses promised faithfully to carry out, after which Jethro took leave of him, and went back again into his own country.

Jethro was the priest as well as prince of Madian, both of which offices were held by the heads of families in the law of nature, before the Mosaic law was given. Like Job and Melchisedech, he served the true God, and offered sacrifice to Him in the midst of a perverse generation.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAW GIVEN ON MOUNT SINAI, B.C. 1491

The Israelites before Mount Sinai.

In the third month after the departure of the Israelites out of the land of Egypt they came into the wilderness of *Sinai*, and pitched their tents over against the mountain. There the Lord called to Moses from the mountain and said: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, how I have carried you upon the wings of eagles, and have taken you to Myself. If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation." When it was announced to the people, through the elders, what God had said to Moses, they all answered together: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Again God spoke to Moses, saying: "Lo now will I come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear Me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever. Go to them, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them

be ready against the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

At the command of God, Moses next appointed around the foot of the mountain certain limits, which he forbade the people to cross, and at the same time pronounced this warning: "Take heed ye go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof: every one that toucheth the mount, dying he shall die. No hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, or shall be shot through with arrows: whether it be beast or man, he shall not live."

God's descent on Sinai.

As soon as the morning of the third day dawned, a scene the most solemn was unfolded. From a thick cloud that covered the mountain's top the lightning flashed, the thunders pealed forth, and the sound, too, as of a trumpet was heard exceedingly loud, so that all in the camp feared. Leading the people forth to meet God, Moses stationed them at the foot of Mount Sinai, upon which the Lord had descended in fire; while the smoke from it went up as from a furnace, and all the mount was terrible. From amidst the darkness, and above the trumpet's sound, was heard the voice of God calling Moses to meet Him on the top of the mountain. After he had gone up, God said to him: "Return, and charge the people lest they should have a mind to pass the limits to see the Lord, and a very great multitude should perish. Thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee; but let not the priests and the people pass the limits."

Then out of the midst of the fire and cloud the Lord spoke these words:

The Ten Commandments.

"I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in

the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them.

"I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.

"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.

"Thou shalt not covet his house, nor his servant, nor his hand-maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."

All the people heard the voices and the sound of the trumpet, they saw the flames and the smoke rising, and being struck with fear, they stood afar off. When Moses

appeared before them, they called to him beseechingly:

The people are struck with fear.

"Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to them: "Fear not, for God is come to prove you, that having the dread of Him in you, you should not sin."

Thus did God publish, in the most solemn manner, the Law according to which His people were to live. The Commandments given on Mount Sinai contain the sum of all the Natural Law, and may be reduced to the two great Precepts of Charity—to love God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. The first three, as we have seen, contain a summary of our *duties to God*, while the remaining seven refer to our *duties to our neighbour:* they were, moreover, written on two separate Tables.

The Commandments a summary of the Natural Law.

The Ten Commandments had been proclaimed by God in the hearing of the assembled people; but now it pleased Him to speak to them no more in person, but to appoint Moses to make known His further commands. Accordingly, while the people stood afar off, Moses was again called up into the mountain, and into the dark cloud wherein God was. Here God imparted to him a series of fresh precepts relating to the religious and civil duties of His people, and these He concluded with the following promises: "Behold I will send My angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee. And you shall serve the Lord your God, that I may bless your bread and your waters, and may take away sickness from the midst of you: I will fill the

God gives other precepts to Moses.

number of thy days. I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and will turn the backs of all thy enemies before thee. I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea to the sea of the Palestines, and from the desert to the river: I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and will drive them out from before you."

The Book of the Covenant.

Moses then went down to the people and told them what God had commanded; whereupon they exclaimed with one voice: "We will do all the words of the Lord which He hath spoken." Moses next wrote down the precepts which he had received; and rising in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mount, and twelve pillars according to the number of the tribes of Israel. After burnt-offerings and peace-offerings had been sacrificed to the Lord, Moses took the *Book of the Covenant** and read it in the hearing of the people, who renewed their promise of obedience. With the blood of the victims that had been sacrificed, he sprinkled the altar and the Book of the Covenant; and turning to the people and sprinkling them also, he said: "This is the blood of the Covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

God shows His glory to the elders.

God now commanded Moses, as well as Aaron, Nadab and Abiu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, to come up into the mountain; but Moses alone was allowed to draw near to the Lord, while the others were to adore afar off. Here they saw the God of Israel, and under His feet, as it were, a work of sapphire stone, bright as the clear heavens. Once more God called Moses into His presence, saying: "Come up to Me into the mount, and be there; and I will give thee

* This was the name given to the Decalogue, because it contains the conditions of the covenant between God and man, and the laws and ordinances which complete and develop it (Exod. xx.-xxiii.).

tables of stone, and the law, and the commandments, that thou mayest teach them." Thereupon Moses, accompanied by his minister Josue, ascended the mount of God, after directing Aaron and Hur, and the ancients, to govern the people in his absence: and a cloud covered the mount for six days, and the glory of the Lord dwelt upon Sinai. On the seventh day God called Moses to enter into the midst of the cloud, where he remained forty days and forty nights; and the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a burning fire upon the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Mysterious converse of God with Moses.

During this time Moses was holding mysterious converse with Almighty God, who gave him most minute instructions concerning the rites to be observed in the Divine worship, and revealed to him the pattern according to which he was to construct the Tabernacle. He concluded His instructions by again commanding the children of Israel to keep the Sabbath, and to celebrate it in their generations. "For," said He, "it is an everlasting Covenant between Me and the children of Israel, and a perpetual sign." And the Lord, when He had ended these words on Mount Sinai, gave to Moses two stone tables of testimony written with the finger of God.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GOLDEN CALF

The people fall into idolatry.

When the people found that days, and even weeks, were passing by, and that Moses did not return to them, they began to grow impatient; and at last, becoming seditious, they assembled before Aaron, exclaiming: "Arise, make us gods that may go before us; for as to this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has befallen

him." Weakly submitting to their wicked demand, and doubtless believing that they would relent when they heard how great a sacrifice his proposal would entail, Aaron said to them: "Take the golden ear-rings from the ears of your wives, and your sons and daughters, and bring them to me." They immediately complied with his request; and Aaron, taking the golden ear-rings, melted them down, and fashioned thereof a molten calf, such as they had seen worshipped among the Egyptians. The people received it with applause, and joyfully cried out: "These are thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." An altar was at once set up to this dumb idol, and Aaron made proclamation by a crier's voice: "To-morrow is the solemnity of the Lord." Then rising in the morning, the people offered holocausts, and peace victims, after which they sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

God's wrath appeased by the prayer of Moses.

Almighty God, seeing their wickedness, said to Moses: "Go, get thee down: thy people, whom thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, have sinned. They have quickly strayed from the way which thou didst show them; for having made to themselves a molten calf, they have sacrificed victims to it, and have adored it. I see that they are a stiff-necked people: let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great nation." But Moses besought the Lord his God, saying: "Why, O Lord, is Thy indignation enkindled against Thy people, whom Thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Let not the Egyptians say, I beseech Thee: 'He craftily brought them out, that He might kill them in the mountains, and destroy them from the earth': let Thy anger cease, and be appeased upon the wickedness of Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac,

and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou sworest by Thy own self, saying: 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven: and this whole land that I have spoken of, I will give to your seed, and you shall possess it for ever.'" God's wrath was appeased by the prayer of Moses, and He refrained from inflicting the punishment which He had decreed against His people.

The Tables of the Law broken.

Moses, attended by Josue, hastened from the mount, carrying in his hand the two tables of the testimony written on both sides, and made by the work of God. Now, as they continued to descend, Josue, struck by the shout of revelry, exclaimed: "The noise of battle is heard in the camp." Moses answered: "It is not the cry of men encouraging to fight, nor the shout of men compelling to flee: but I hear the voice of singers." When he drew nigh to the camp, and saw the calf and the dancers, he was very angry, and in his wrath threw the tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount. Then laying hold of the calf which they had made, he burnt it, and beat it to powder, which he strewed into water, and gave thereof to the children of Israel to drink. Having called Aaron, he said to him: "What have these people done to thee, that thou shouldst bring upon them a most heinous sin?" Aaron answered his brother with all humility, and told him that he had acted thus in response to their urgent and importunate demands. Standing in the gate of the camp, Moses cried out in a loud voice: "If any man be on the Lord's side, let him join with me." At once all the sons of Levi gathered together, and ranged themselves by his side. Commanding them to take their swords, he bade them go and return from gate to gate through the midst of the camp, and slay without mercy whoever should come in their way, whether he were brother, friend, or neighbour. The Levites did according to the words of Moses, and there

were slain that day about three and twenty thousand. Next day Moses said to the people: "You have sinned a very great sin: I will go up to the Lord, to try if by any means I may be able to entreat Him for your crime." Then returning to the Lord, he prayed: "I beseech Thee: these people have sinned a heinous sin, and they have made to themselves gods of gold: *either forgive them this trespass, or if Thou do not, strike me out of the book that Thou hast written.*" The Lord answered him: "He that hath sinned against Me shall be struck out of My book. But go thou, and lead the people whither I have told thee: My angel shall go before thee."

God speaks to Moses before the people.

When the people were told that the Lord would send His angel before them, but that He Himself would not go up with them, because they were a stiff-necked people, and He might destroy them in the way, they were overcome with grief and gave themselves up to mourning, no man putting on his ornaments according to custom. Moses then took the tabernacle, and having pitched it without the camp afar off, called it the *Tabernacle of the Covenant.** At the time of his going forth, the people rose up, and every one stood in the door of his pavilion, from which he beheld the back of Moses till he went into the tabernacle. Seeing that the Pillar of the Cloud came down and stood at the entrance of the tabernacle, they worshipped at the doors of their tents. That day the Lord spoke to Moses as a man is wont to speak to his friend. Moses said to Him: "If Thou Thyself dost not go before, bring us not out of this place; for how shall we be able to know, I and Thy people, that we have found grace in Thy sight, unless Thou walk with us?" The Lord said to him

* This was not the Tabernacle whose construction God had described to Moses on the Mount, but one destined for public and private prayer.

"This word also, which thou hast spoken, will I do; for thou hast found grace before Me."

od displays is glory to loses

To the request of Moses that God would show him His glory, God answered: "Thou canst not see My face; for man shall not see Me and live. Behold thou shalt stand upon the rock, and when My glory shall pass, I will set thee in a hole in the rock, and protect thee with My right hand till I pass." In this wonderful vision it was permitted to Moses to see something of God in an assumed form: not in the face, the rays of which were too bright for mortal eye, but to view Him as it were "in a glass darkly," when His face was turned from him.

he Tables of ie Law re- ewed.

After God had so wonderfully manifested Himself to Moses, He said to him: "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the former, and I will write upon them the words that were on the tables which thou hast broken. Be ready in the morning that thou mayest go up into Mount Sinai, and thou shalt stand with Me upon the top of the mount." Early in the morning, Moses, carrying with him the two tables of stone, went up into the mountain alone; and when the Lord had again descended in a cloud, he called upon His name, saying: "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, who keepest mercy unto thousands: who takest away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin, and no man of himself is innocent, before Thee. If I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, I beseech Thee that Thou wilt go with us, and take away our iniquities and sin, and possess us." The Lord answered: "I will make a covenant in the sight of all. I will do signs such as were never seen upon the earth, nor in any nations, that this people, in the midst of whom thou art, may see the terrible work of the Lord which I will do. Observe all the things which this day I

command thee." He then imparted to Moses Hi commands concerning the conduct of the people, and th manner in which they were to worship Him. Moses wa again with the Lord forty days and forty nights, durin which time he neither ate nor drank. Taking the tw tables of stone on which God had inscribed the Te Commandments, he came down from Mount Sina unconscious of any change that had been wrought in hi countenance; but when Aaron and the children of Isra saw his face shining, and sending forth rays of light lik horns, they were afraid to come near him. Being tol the cause of their fear, he first repeated to the people a that he had heard from the Lord on Mount Sinai, an then covered his face with a veil, which he continued t wear at all times, except when he entered the tabernac to speak with the Lord. What God had imparted t him may be summarised thus:

The Jewish Law.

"*The Jewish Law*—that is to say, the entire system legislation communicated to the Jews b Moses—comprised three distinct portion These are called respectively the *Judicial*, th *Ceremonial*, and the *Moral* Laws.

"1. *The Judicial Law* was that which regarded th temporal government of the Jewish people. This, course, remained in force only so long as the Jews form a distinct nation: it has, therefore, long since passed awa

"2. *The Ceremonial Law* regarded the various rites religious worship, prescribed to be observed by the chos people. The forms of worship which it regulated we but 'a shadow of good things to come' (Heb. x. 1); was therefore abrogated when the spiritual blessings th were thus foreshadowed were given (in full) to mankind i the Christian dispensation.

"3. *The Moral Law* set forth in the Ten Comman ments was of a different nature. With one slight exce

tion—the special precept regarding the sanctification of the *seventh* day of the week—it applied not to Jews only, but to the whole human race. The obligation of observing these precepts is proclaimed by the voice of nature itself. This portion of the law, therefore, still retains its full force: it rests no longer on the authority of Moses, but on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. For He has made its observance a condition of salvation: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments' (Matt. xix. 17)."*

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TABERNACLE AND ITS APPURTENANCES

HAVING gathered together all the multitude of the children of Israel, Moses again repeated to them the commands he had received from God respecting the observance of the Sabbath day, and informed them of the directions that had been given him for the construction of a Tabernacle for the Divine service. He then invited everyone that was willing, and had a ready heart, to make free offerings of gold, silver, and brass, of violet and purple hangings, of fine linen, and of whatever else would be required for the Tabernacle and its furniture.

Moses invites offerings for the Tabernacle.

This request met with a ready response; and all the people, both men and women, with devout mind, offered gifts, that the works might be done which the Lord had commanded. So great was the zeal displayed, and in such quantities did they bring their offerings of gold and precious stones, and their rich and costly stuffs, that Moses was compelled to make known by proclamation that they should cease from

Bezaleel and Aholiab.

* Reeve, p. 105.

bringing more, as the things already offered were more than sufficient. He next spoke thus to the children of Israel: "Behold the Lord hath called by name *Beseleel*, of the tribe of Juda, and hath filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding, and knowledge, and all learning. He hath given him to devise and to work in gold and silver and brass, and in engraving stones, and whatever can be devised artificially. Both him and *Ooliab*, of the tribe of Dan, hath God instructed with wisdom to do carpenter's work, and tapestry, and embroidery in blue and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and to weave all things, and to invent all new things." Beseleel, therefore, and Ooliab, and every wise man, to whom the Lord gave wisdom and understanding to know how to work artificially, made the things that were necessary for the use of the sanctuary.

The Court of the Tabernacle.

The Court of the Tabernacle, which enclosed the *Tabernacle*, the *Altar of Holocausts*, *and the Brazen Laver of Purification*, was an oblong space, the length of which was from east to west 100 cubits and the breadth 50 cubits; or, if we take the cubit to be 1½ feet in length, 150 feet by 75 feet. This area was enclosed by hangings, and was entered from the east. To support these hangings, pillars were erected 5 cubits high and 5 cubits apart, and were fixed in sockets of brass, while their heads and engravings were of silver. Over the entrance, whose width was 20 cubits, hung an embroidered curtain of violet, purple, scarlet and fine twisted linen.

The Tabernacle itself.

The Tabernacle itself stood at the west end of the enclosure, and consisted of an oblong tent the back and sides of which were made of setim-wood overlaid with gold. Its length was 30 cubits, its breadth 10 cubits, and its height 10 cubits. At its east end was a curtain of fine linen richly

embroidered in violet, purple, and scarlet, and supported by five pillars of setim-wood overlaid with gold and fixed in sockets of brass. As a covering for the Tabernacle *four* sets of curtains were employed. The *first* set consisted of fine twisted linen, richly embroidered in violet, purple, and scarlet, the whole being joined together by fifty rings of gold and loops of violet; the *second* was composed of goats' hair; the *third* of rams' skins dyed red; and the *fourth* of violet-coloured skins.

The interior of the Tabernacle was divided into two parts by means of a rich veil suspended from *four* pillars of setim-wood overlaid with gold, and fixed in sockets of silver. The outer chamber was 20 cubits long, and was called the *Sanctuary;* the inner, 10 cubits long, was named the *Holy of Holies.*

The Holy of Holies.

The *Holy of Holies*, into which only the High Priest was to enter, and he but once a year, on the Festival of Atonement, contained the *Ark of the Covenant.*

The Sanctuary.

In the *Sanctuary*, on the north side, stood the *Table of Show-Bread;* on the south side, the *Golden Candlestick;* while in the centre, in front of the Holy of Holies, was placed the *Altar of Incense.*

In the outer court of the Tabernacle, and situated near the entrance, stood the *Altar of Holocausts;* and between it and the Tabernacle itself was the *Brazen Laver of Purification.*

The Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant, which, as we have seen, was placed in the Holy of Holies, was the most sacred emblem of the religion of the Jews. It is sometimes spoken of as the *Ark of Testimony*, and contained the two Tables of the Law inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The Ark itself was made of setim-wood, and measured two cubits and a half in length, a cubit and a half in breadth, and a cubit

and a half in height; it was overlaid within and without with the purest gold, and was crowned with gold around the top. At the four corners were rings, also of pure gold, through which passed two bars of setim-wood, covered with gold, by which the Ark could be carried. The cover of the Ark was made of solid gold, and was called the *Propitiatory* or *Mercy-Seat*. On the Propitiatory were two golden cherubim with wings extended so as to cover the Ark, and placed face to face with heads bent downwards. Here it was that Almighty God had promised to make known His will in these His words to Moses: "Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee over the Propitiatory, and *from the midst of the two cherubim which shall be upon the Ark of the Testimony*, all things which I will command the children of Israel by thee" (Exod. xxv. 22).

The Table of Show-Bread.

The Table of Show-Bread was made of setim-wood, and was two cubits in length, a cubit in breadth, and a cubit and a half in height. It was overlaid with the purest gold, having all around a golden ledge, from which arose polished ornamental work four inches in height, and above this a smaller cornice, also of pure gold. Golden rings, through which were to pass the bars for carrying the table, were fixed at each of the four corners immediately above the feet, and the bars themselves were made of setim-wood overlaid with gold. Dishes and bowls, censers and cups, of the purest gold, out of which the libations were to be offered, were also to be prepared; and upon the table *Loaves of Proposition* were to be set in presence of the Lord always.

The Loaves of Proposition.

The Loaves, which were *twelve* in number, and made of the finest flour without leaven, were placed in two heaps, one at each end of the Table. There they were to remain for a week; at the end of which time they were to be replaced by twelve fresh ones: "Every Sabbath shall they be changed before

the Lord, being received of the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant." The Loaves that had been exposed were to be eaten by none but the priests: "And they shall be Aaron's and his sons', that they may eat them in the Holy Place: because it is most holy of the sacrifices of the Lord by a perpetual rite" (Lev. xxiv. 9).

The Show-Bread was to be "*for a memorial of the oblation to the Lord*" (Lev. xxiv. 7)—a *memorial* for the Lord to bless His people, and for them to make their oblation to Him, as to the living God from whom all blessings are derived; and, that each of the *twelve tribes* might participate in this public act of thanksgiving, the loaves were *twelve* in number. The Show-Bread, moreover, was a type of the Blessed Eucharist (*Holy Thanksgiving*)—that Heavenly Bread, ever present in our churches, and daily offered to God in perpetual *thanksgiving* for all His graces and blessings.

The Golden Candlestick was made according to these instructions given by God to Moses: "Thou shalt make also a candlestick of beaten work, of the finest gold, the shaft thereof, and the branches, the cups, and the bowls, and the lilies going forth from it. Six branches shall come out of the sides, three out of one side, and three out of the other, and there shall be three cups as it were nuts to every branch, and a bowl, and a lily. Such shall be the work of the six branches that are to come out from the shaft, and in the candlestick itself shall be four cups in the manner of a nut, and at every one bowls and lilies. Thou shalt make also seven lamps, and shalt set them upon the candlestick; and the whole weight of the candlestick, with all the furniture thereof, shall be a talent of the purest gold."*

he Golden andlestick.

This candlestick, with its *seven* lamps, which was always to give light in the house of God, was a figure of the light

A talent of gold = nearly 132 pounds Troy.

of the Holy Ghost and His *sevenfold* grace in the sanctuary of the Church of Christ.

The Altar of Incense.

The Altar of Incense was made of setim-wood, and was two cubits high, one long, and one broad, and from each corner of it went out horns. The altar, together with the horns, the sides, and the grate, was overlaid with the purest gold, and had a cornice of gold round about. Under the cornice, on each side, were two golden rings through which ran the golden-plated bars of setim-wood by which the altar was to be carried. "The altar," said Almighty God to Moses, "thou shalt set over against the veil that hangeth before the Ark of the Testimony, and Aaron shall burn sweet-smelling incense upon it in the morning. When he shall dress the lamps, he shall burn it; and when he shall place them in the evening, he shall burn an everlasting incense before the Lord. And once a year Aaron shall pray upon the horns of the altar, after sprinkling them with the blood of that which was offered for sin; and he shall make atonement upon it in your generations. It shall be most holy to the Lord."

The Altar of Holocausts.

The Altar of Holocausts or of *Burnt-Offerings* was three cubits high, five long, and five broad. It was hollow, and was made of setim-wood covered with plates of brass. At each corner it had horns of brass; a grating of brass with rings at each corner was placed on the top, and under this grating, in the midst of the altar, a hearth. That the altar might be carried more easily, it was furnished with rings, through which ran bars of setim-wood overlaid with brass.

The Brazen Laver.

The Brazen Laver, together with the foot thereof, was made from the brass mirrors presented by the women who watched at the entrance to the Tabernacle. In it the priests were commanded to wash their hands and feet when they went into the

Tabernacle, and when they came to the altar to offer incense on it to the Lord. The omission was punishable by death. How forcibly should this remind us of that purity and holiness which become the House of God!

CHAPTER XXVII

THE VESTMENTS OF THE PRIESTS — THE TABERNACLE SET UP, B.C. 1490

Vestments common to all the priests.

Of the priestly vestments which Almighty God commanded Moses to make, some were common to all the priests, others were peculiar to the High Priest, and were passed on to his successor after his death. Those common to all were fine *linen drawers;* a long, close-fitting *tunic* which reached down to the feet and had sleeves that were tied fast to the arms; a linen *girdle* embroidered with flowers of violet and purple and scarlet and fine twisted linen, that went several times round the body, while its ends hung down to the ankles; and lastly, a linen *mitre.*

Vestments peculiar to the High Priest.

The vestments of the High Priest were far more rich and splendid. In addition to those named above he wore the *Tunic of the Ephod;* over this the *Ephod* itself with its girdle; next the *Rational* or *Breastplate of Judgment;* and, attached to the mitre, a gold plate, on which were engraved the words *Holy to the Lord.*

The Tunic of the Ephod.

The Tunic of the Ephod was a long violet robe without sleeves, worn over the linen tunic, and reaching down to the feet. It had an opening for the head to pass through, and partings in the sides for the arms. The lower edge of the tunic was beautifully ornamented with pomegranates worked in violet, purple, and scarlet; and between each pomegranate

was a golden bell to give forth a tinkling sound whenever the High Priest entered or came out of the Sanctuary.

The Ephod.

The Ephod was a garment composed of two parts, one of which covered the back, the other the breast and upper part of the body. These two parts were fastened together at the shoulders by means of two onyx stones, on each of which were engraved six of the names of the tribes of Israel. The Ephod was made of the most costly materials: "The very workmanship also, and all the variety of the work, shall be of gold, and violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen." It was gathered together at the waist by a richly embroidered girdle.

The Rational.

The Rational or *Breastplate of Judgment* was composed of the same material as the Ephod, and consisted of a rich piece of embroidery shaped in the form of a square measuring a span each way, and made double so as to resemble a bag. It was placed on the front of the Ephod over the breast, and was fastened to the two onyx stones by means of chains and rings of gold, while, below, it was kept in position above the girdle by rings of gold and a violet fillet. On the front of it were arranged twelve precious stones in four rows, each stone having the name of one of the twelve tribes engraved upon it. Within the Breastplate were the *Urim* and *Thummim*,* signifying *Illuminations* and *Perfections*, or *Doctrine* and *Truth*. These were mysterious objects employed in some way by the High Priest for ascertaining the Divine will. "And thou shalt put in the Rational of Judgment, *Doctrine* and *Truth*, which shall be on Aaron's breast, when he shall go in before the Lord: and he shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel

* These were probably an outward symbol, no longer known to us, of the revelation which God vouchsafed to Israel. To consult *Urim* and *Thummim* was to consult God Himself, for He had promised to make known His will in important matters in this way.

on his breast, in the sight of the Lord always" (Exod. xxviii. 30).

The Mitre.

The Mitre was of white linen; and fastened to it by means of a violet fillet was a gold plate inscribed with the words *Holy to the Lord.* This plate hung over the forehead of the High Priest.

Aaron and his sons consecrated.

All things being now ready, God spoke again to Moses, saying: "The first month, the first day of the month, thou shalt set up the tabernacle of the testimony, and shalt put the ark in it, and shalt let down the veil before it. Thou shalt take the oil of unction and anoint the tabernacle with its vessels, that they may be sanctified: thou shalt consecrate all, that they may be most holy. And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony, and having washed them with water, thou shalt put on them the holy vestments, that they may minister to Me, and that the unction of them may prosper to an everlasting priesthood." Thus, in the beginning of the second year after the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, Aaron and his sons were consecrated priests, and appointed to officiate in the sacred ministry to which God had called them.

As the Priesthood was hereditary in Aaron's family, this first unction might have sufficed for all; yet, till the days of our Saviour, the new High Priests were always anointed afresh.

The Cloud covers the Tabernacle.

In a most wonderful way did Almighty God express His approval of the manner in which His commands had been carried out. After all things were perfected, the Cloud covered the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and the glory of the Lord filled it. If at any time the Cloud removed from the Tabernacle, the children of Israel went forth by their troops; but if it hung over, they remained in the same place.

Exod 29 - 6

"For the Cloud of the Lord hung over the Tabernacle by day, and a fire by night, in the sight of all the children of Israel" (Exod. xl. 36).

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

This Book is called *Leviticus* because it treats of the offices, ministries, rites, and ceremonies of the Priests and the Levites. It explains the sacrifices, the ordination of the Priests and Levites, and treats of the Feasts of the Old Law and of the laws concerning vows. Leviticus covers a period of one month—the month of Nisan in the second year after the Exodus, while the Hebrews remained at the foot of Mount Sinai.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES

The tribe of Levi consecrated to the Priesthood.

UNTIL the time of Moses, the head of each family and the first-born son were priests in their own houses; but after the departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt, the tribe of Levi, for its fidelity and zeal on the occasion of the worship of the Golden Calf, was set apart and consecrated in a special manner for the service of the Tabernacle. Aaron and his sons were chosen by God to the Priesthood, and they alone could offer sacrifice, while the duty of the rest of the tribe, or of the *Levites*, was to serve the Tabernacle, and to assist the priests in their ministrations.

The High Priest.

The High Priest, the first-born son of the family of Aaron, alone might enter into the Holy of Holies, and he but once a year, on the great day of atonement, when he sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering on the mercy-seat, and burnt incense within the veil. As this was a day of sorrow and of penance, the High Priest appeared clad entirely in

white linen, without jewels, like one of the inferior priests. His office was for life.

The Priests.

The Priests, the remaining sons of the family of Aaron, stood between the *High Priest* on the one hand, and the *Levites* on the other. Their duties were to tend the sacred fire on the Altar of Burnt-Offerings—the fire which came down from heaven, and which henceforth was to be kept burning night and day, a figure of the heavenly fire of Divine love, which ought always to be burning in the heart of a Christian—to feed with oil the Golden Lamp, to offer the morning and evening sacrifices by which God, the Author of day and night, was to be adored; every seventh day to lay on the Table of Show-Bread the Loaves of Proposition; to sound the silver trumpets when the people were required to assemble; to examine and give judgment in cases of leprosy; and to teach the children of Israel all the ordinances which the Lord had made known to Moses.

The Levites.

The Levites, whose duty it was to assist the Priests, included all the males of the tribe of Levi who were not of the family of Aaron. They were divided into three families, the *Caathites*, the *Gersonites*, and the *Merarites*, from the three sons of Levi, *Caath*, *Gerson*, and *Merari*. They entered upon their duties at the age of thirty.

The Caathites.

The Caathites, as we read in the Book of Numbers, were assigned the duty of bearing the sacred vessels whenever the Tabernacle was removed. "And when Aaron and his sons have wrapped up the sanctuary and the vessels thereof at the removing of the camp, then shall the sons of Caath enter in to carry the things wrapped up: and they shall not touch the vessels of the sanctuary, lest they die" (Num. iv. 15).

The Gersonites.

The Gersonites had charge of the curtains, veils, and tent-hangings.

The Merarites.

The Merarites saw to the removal of the heavier portions of the Tabernacle, such as the pillars, boards, and bars. They, as well as the Gersonites, were permitted to use oxen and waggons, but the Caathites, who had charge of the more sacred vessels, had to carry their burdens on their shoulders. Whenever the Israelites encamped, the tents of the tribe of Levi were arranged close round the Tabernacle: those of the priests on the east, the Caathites on the south, the Gersonites on the west, and the Merarites on the north.

Nadab and Abiu are struck dead by fire from heaven.

Aaron, after he and his sons had been solemnly consecrated to the Priesthood, went with Moses into the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and afterwards came forth and blessed the people. "And the glory of the Lord appeared to all the multitude: and behold a fire, coming forth from the Lord, devoured the holocaust, and the fat that was upon the altar: which when the multitude saw, they praised the Lord, falling on their faces." Thus was God pleased to show His approval both of the priests and of the victims, and to impress a religious awe upon the minds of the spectators. This miraculous fire sent from heaven was carefully preserved and nourished by the priests, and was from that time made use of for all the sacrifices. Now Nadab and Abiu, the eldest sons of Aaron, filled their censers with common fire, and having put incense upon it, were struck dead upon the spot, for offering before the Lord strange fire which was not commanded them. "And fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. x. 2). Moses commanded the dead bodies, vested as they were in their linen tunics, to be carried from before the Sanctuary and to be cast forth from the camp. At the same time he forbade Aaron and his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, to show any signs of sorrow, either by uncovering their heads

or rending their garments, although it was permitted to the rest of the house of Israel to mourn for them.

he blasphemer oned to death.

Terrible and sudden as was the punishment of Nadab and Abiu for their neglect in offering "strange fire," it was quickly followed by another instance of God's severity in the punishment of the blasphemer. While the Israelites were still encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, a man, the son of an Egyptian father and a Hebrew mother, quarrelled with an Israelite, and, in the heat of their altercation, blasphemed the sacred name of God. Shocked at what they had heard, those standing near seized the man and led him before Moses, who ordered him to be fast bound till he himself had consulted the will of God in prayer. And the Lord spoke to Moses, and said: "Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp, and let them that heard him put their hands upon his head, and let all the people stone him. The man that curseth his God shall bear his sin: and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die: all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger."

ıe Sabbath-aker stoned death.

In the Book of Numbers we read of a similar punishment being inflicted on a man for having gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. It came to pass, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and had found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, that they brought him to Moses and Aaron, and the whole multitude, who put him into prison till it should be known what punishment they were to inflict upon him. And the Lord said to Moses: "Let that man die, let all the multitude stone him without the camp"; and when they had brought him out, they stoned him to death, as the Lord had commanded. Thus did God make a severe example of those who first transgressed against His laws, that their punishment might serve as a restraint to others

who, through carelessness or wilfulness, should be tempted to set at naught the Divine commands. Other such examples are to be seen in the case of our first parents, of Cain, of the people of Sodom and Gomorrha, of the worshippers of the Golden Calf, and later in the punishment of Saul for his disobedience, and in the terrible judgment which befell Ananias and Saphira for having lied to the Holy Ghost.

Regulations regarding leprosy.

Among the many regulations given in the Book of Leviticus, those concerning leprosy are of special interest, as leprosy is in particular a type of sin; and the observances here prescribed intimate what ought spiritually to be done in order to be delivered or preserved from so great an evil. The man who was suspected of being a leper was commanded by the law of Moses to show himself to the priest who, having examined him, caused him to be shut up for seven days. If at the end of that time the appearance of leprosy had not spread, the suspected person was shut up for another period of seven days, after which he was declared to be clean if there were no further development.

But of the man whom the priest should declare infected we read: "Whosoever shall be defiled with the leprosy and is separated by the judgment of the priest, shall have his clothes hanging loose, his head bare, his mouth covered with a cloth, and he shall cry out that he is defiled and unclean. All the time that he is a leper and unclean, he shall dwell alone without the camp" (Lev. xiii. 44-46). Should he recover from his frightful disease, he was again commanded to show himself to the priest, and to offer certain prescribed sacrifices as a thanksgiving. When the ceremony of purification was ended, i.e., when these prescriptions had been complied with, the priest pronounced him clean, and he was again restored to the society of his fellow-men. The authority of the priest in the new law

bind or loose from sin is here prefigured in a most striking manner: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx. 23).

ıe Sacrament Penance reshadowed.

Furthermore, in the Book of Numbers we have the Sacrament of Penance most clearly foreshadowed in these words of Almighty God to Moses: "When a man or woman shall have committed any of the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall *confess* their sins, and *restore* the principal itself, and the fifth part over and above, to him against whom they have sinned. But if there be no one to receive it, they shall give it to the Lord, and it shall be the priest's, besides the ram that is offered for expiation, to be an *atoning* sacrifice" (Num. v. 6-8). Thus was required a special *confession* of sin with *satisfaction* and *restitution*.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FESTIVALS AND SACRIFICES

ıe Sabbath.

We come now to the feasts of the Lord, which were to be called holy, and which were to be observed with due solemnity. First of all, God repeated His command to sanctify one day in each week to His service: "Six days shall you do work: the seventh day, because it is the rest of the Sabbath, shall be called holy. You shall do no work on that day" (Lev. xxiii. 3).

Then are mentioned in order the holy-days of the Lord, which God commanded to be celebrated in their seasons. "The first month, the fourteenth day of the month at evening, is the Phase of the Lord: and the fifteenth day of the same month is the solemnity of the unleavened

bread of the Lord. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread. The first day shall be most solemn unto you, and holy: you shall do no servile work therein: but you shall offer sacrifice to the Lord seven days. And the seventh day shall be more solemn and more holy: and you shall do no servile work therein" (Lev. xxiii. 5-8).

The Feast of the Pasch.

This was the great *Festival of the Pasch* or *Passover*, which was to be celebrated annually for all time, in memory of the departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. The feast, as we have seen, lasted for seven days, commencing on the evening of the *fourteenth* of *Nisan* (*March—April*), and continuing until the evening of the *twenty-first*. On the evening of the fourteenth the Paschal Lamb was eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, while on each of the seven days special sacrifices were prescribed. On the *sixteenth* day of the month was the offering of the "*sheaf*"—the first sheaf of the harvest, when a sheaf of barley was brought to the priest, who lifted it up before the Lord. But the first and the last of the seven days were commanded to be observed with special solemnity. This feast is sometimes spoken of as the *Feast of Azymes*, or of unleavened bread.

The Feast of Pentecost.

Next came the great *Feast of Pentecost* (*fiftieth*), also called the *Feast of Harvest*, and again the *Feast of Weeks*. "You shall count from the morrow after the Sabbath, wherein you offered the sheaf of the first-fruits, seven full weeks, even unto the morrow after the seventh week be expired, that is to say *fifty days*, and so you shall offer a new sacrifice to the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 15, 16). A special feature of this feast was the offering of *two loaves of leavened bread* made from the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. This was a feast not only in thanksgiving for the completed harvest but in memory of the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, *fifty days* from the Passover. A

great feast of Pentecost, *fifty days* after the solemn festival of Easter, did the Holy Ghost come down to enlighten and guide the Church of Christ till the end of time.

The Feast of Tabernacles was the third of the great festivals. "From the fifteenth day of the seventh month (*Tisri*, *October*), shall be kept the Feast of Tabernacles seven days to the Lord. The first day shall be called most solemn and most holy: you shall do no servile work therein. And seven days you shall offer holocausts to the Lord. The eighth day also shall be most solemn and most holy" (Lev. xxiii. 34-36). This was at once a festival of thanksgiving after the ingathering of the fruits, and a solemn commemoration of Israel's dwelling in tents at the time of their journey through the desert. Even after they came into the Land of Promise, the Israelites were commanded, during this festival, to live in tents or booths made from the branches of trees. "And you shall dwell in bowers seven days: every one that is of the race of Israel shall dwell in tabernacles; that your posterity may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tabernacles, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xxiii. 42, 43).

e Feast of bernacles.

Other sacred seasons and festivals were the *Feast of the New Moon*, the *Feast of Trumpets*, the *Day of Expiation* or *Atonement*, the *Sabbatical Year*, and the *Year of Jubilee*.

The Feast of the New Moon, although not observed as a Sabbath, was nevertheless signalised by the offering of additional sacrifices, and was announced to the people by the sounding of the silver trumpets. "On the first days of your months you shall sound the trumpets over the holocausts and sacrifices of peace-offerings, that they may be to you for a remembrance of your God" (Num. x. 10).

e Feast of New Moon.

The Feast of Trumpets was celebrated on the *first day* of the *seventh month* (*Tisri*)—the Sabbatical month, and

sanctified in a special manner the commencement of the civil year. The feast was ushered in by the blowing of trumpets. "The seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall keep a Sabbath, a memorial, with the sound of trumpets, and it shall be called holy. You shall do no servile work therein, and you shall offer a holocaust to the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 24, 25).

The Feast of Trumpets.

The Day of Atonement also took place in the month of Tisri. "Upon the *tenth* day of this seventh month shall be the day of atonement: it shall be most solemn, and shall be called holy: and you shall afflict your souls on that day, and shall offer a holocaust to the Lord. You shall do no servile work in the time of this day: because it is a day of propitiation, that the Lord your God may be merciful unto you" (Lev. xxiii. 27, 28). On this occasion the High Priest put aside his pontifical vestments, and, clothed in white linen garments, offered a calf and prayed for himself and his own family. Entering within the veil, he burnt incense before the Mercy Seat, which he sprinkled seven times with the blood of the calf. He then led before the door of the Tabernacle of the Testimony two he-goats presented by the people. On these he cast lots to determine which was to be offered in sacrifice, and which was to be the emissary goat. The former was slain as a sin-offering for the people, and the High Priest again went into the Holy Place and performed the same ceremonies with its blood. The latter he presented alive before the Lord; and when he had laid both his hands upon its head, and confessed over it the iniquities of the children of Israel, loaded as it were with the sins of the people, it was led out by a man chosen for the purpose, and turned into the desert, into an uninhabited place, where it remained exposed to the mercy of the wild beasts. The High Priest, having washed himself in the Holy Place, once more resumed the pontifical robes and completed the offer-

The Day of Atonement.

ing of the victims. The scape-goat was a figure of our Saviour, charged with all our sins in His passion, and handed over to the brutal cruelty of His enemies.

The Sabbatical Year.

The Sabbatical Year was every *seventh* year; and just as the seventh day and the seventh month were to be kept holy, so also was the seventh year to be regarded as a holy year. During this year the soil was to lie fallow, the vines were not to be pruned, nor were any of the fruits of the earth to be gathered in. That which grew without the aid of man belonged as common property to the whole community. "Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and thou shalt gather the fruits thereof: but in the *seventh year* there shall be a Sabbath to the land, of the resting of the Lord: thou shalt not sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. What the ground shall bring forth of itself thou shalt not reap; neither shalt thou gather the grapes of the first-fruits as a vintage: for it is a year of rest to the land: but they shall be unto you for meat, to thee and to thy man-servant, to thy maid-servant and thy hireling, and the strangers that sojourn with thee. All things that grow shall be meat to thy beasts and thy cattle" (Lev. xxv. 3-7). This year was also called *The Year of Release*, because in it creditors were bound to release poor debtors from their obligations; and the Hebrew slave, after having served six years, must, in the seventh year, be released from captivity.

The Year of Jubilee.

The Year of Jubilee was celebrated every *fiftieth* year—that is, after the completion of seven times seven years. During the year of jubilee all debts were to be cancelled, the imprisoned were to be set free, and the slave was to receive his liberty. "Thou shalt also number to thee seven weeks of years, that is to say, seven times seven, which together make forty-nine years. And thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year, and shalt

proclaim remission to all the inhabitants of thy land: for it is the year of jubilee. Every man shall return to his possession, and every one shall go back to his former family. You shall not sow nor reap the things that grow in the field of their own accord, neither shall you gather the first-fruits of the vines, but as they grow you shall presently eat them" (Lev. xxv. 8-12).

Sacrifices.

The sacrifices prescribed by the Law of Moses were numerous and varied, and were offered to God as a perpetual commemoration of His covenant with His chosen people, in thanksgiving for His favours and mercies, and in atonement for sin.

The sacrifices were either *Bloody* or *Unbloody*. The victims offered in *Bloody Sacrifices* were to be without blemish, and consisted of a *bullock*, a *lamb* or a *kid*, *turtle-doves*, or *young pigeons*.

Bloody Sacrifices.

Of *Bloody Sacrifices* there were *four classes: Holocausts* or *Whole Burnt-Offerings*, *Peace-Offerings*, *Sin-Offerings*, and *Trespass-Offerings*.

Holocausts (Greek *holos* = whole, and *kaustos* = burnt) were so called because the victim was entirely consumed by fire on the altar. They were offered as an act of adoration to God, to acknowledge His supreme dominion over all creatures, and as a token of our dependence on the Lord of life and death.

Peace-Offerings were made to thank Almighty God for favours received, and in supplication for further graces.

Sin-Offerings were in expiation for sins committed in ignorance, for unintentional or material sins, and as a purification from sin in general.

Trespass-Offerings were made for some particular sin committed knowingly, and sins committed through culpable ignorance. In the case of a person who had injured his neighbour's property, the offering was to be accompanied with restitution.

Unbloody Sacrifices, or Oblations, in which no shedding of blood took place, were of two kinds; they were those in which were offered: (1) *the fruits of the earth*, such as *flour*, *meal*, *corn*, *fruit*, *cakes*, and *salt*; (2) *liquids*, such as *oil* and *wine*. These were instituted[1] for the poor,[2] to support the ministers of religion,[3] and to show that God was to be honoured with the fruits of the earth. Often they were mere oblations, sometimes real sacrifices, and as such were offered either with the Burnt-Offerings, or, in the case of the poor, in substitution for them. Hence, when offered in sacrifice, such offerings, as in the case of animals, were either wholly or partially destroyed. In the case of liquids, they were poured out as libations at the foot of the altar. The person offering the sacrifice had to furnish all things belonging to it.

nbloody acrifices.

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

This, the *fourth* Book of Moses, is called *Numbers*, because it begins with an account of the *numbering* of the people. It relates the transactions of the Israelites from the *second month* of the *second year* after the Exodus, until the *eleventh month* of the *fortieth year*, from B.C. 1490 to B.C. 1451, *i.e.*, till their arrival at the borders of the Promised Land.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MARCH FROM SINAI, B.C. 1490

On the first day of the second month of the second year after the departure of the Hebrews out of Egypt, God spoke to Moses in the Tabernacle of the Covenant, and said to him: "Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel by their families, and houses, and the names of

oses is com- inded to mber the ople.

every one of the male sex from twenty years old and upwards fit for war, and you shall number them by their troops."

The number of men of the prescribed age was found to be 603,550, excluding the Levites, who were exempt from military duties, having been set apart, as we have seen, for the service of the Tabernacle. They were next drawn up according to their tribes, each of which was commanded by a chosen prince, and had its own peculiar standard around which to rally. The whole host, moreover, was drawn up in *four* large bodies under *Juda*, *Ruben*, *Ephraim*, and *Dan* respectively. Whenever the Israelites halted, these four camps surrounded the Tabernacle, while on the march some went before and some after it.

Order of march.

The time was now at hand when the Israelites were to depart. On the twentieth day in the second month of the second year after the Exodus, the Cloud rose from the Tabernacle, and they prepared to set forward by their troops from the desert of Sinai. As soon as the Ark, which was to be carried in front, was lifted up by its bearers, Moses cried out: "*Arise, O Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee from before Thy face.*" They then departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, preceded by the Ark of the Covenant, and with the Cloud over them by day to guide them as they marched. When the Ark was set down, Moses exclaimed: "*Return, O Lord, to the multitude of the host of Israel.*"

The departure from Sinai.

The Israelites had not advanced far on their journey when, fatigued by their continued marching, they began to murmur. God was angry with them, and sent fire among them, which destroyed many. In their alarm they cried to Moses to pray for them, which he did, and the fire was swallowed up.

The people, being fatigued, complain.

Moses then called the place *Taberah* (*The Burning*), because the fire of the Lord had been kindled against them.

They long for the flesh-pots of Egypt.

Their discontent was not long in breaking out afresh, and again they complained—this time against the manna so miraculously supplied for their daily wants; and once more they longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt. The *mixed multitude* of people, who were not of the race of Israel, but had come out of Egypt with them, began to murmur, saying: "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" They then sat down and wept; and when the children of Israel saw them, they also joined in their expressions of discontent, and said: "Our soul is dry, our eyes behold nothing else but manna." Now Moses heard their complaints as they stood at the entrance of their tents, and so overcome with grief was he on their account that he cried to the Lord: "Why hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? Wherefore do I not find favour before Thee? And why hast Thou laid the weight of all this people upon me? Whence should I have flesh to give to so great a multitude? They weep against me, saying: 'Give us flesh that we may eat.' I am not able alone to bear all this people, because it is too heavy for me. I beseech Thee to kill me, and let me find grace in Thy eyes, that I be not afflicted with so great evils."

The seventy elders.

Although the wrath of the Lord was exceedingly enkindled against the people, He nevertheless said to Moses: "Gather unto Me *seventy men* of the ancients of Israel, whom thou knowest to be masters of the people. Thou shalt bring them to the door of the Tabernacle of the Covenant, and shalt make them stand there with thee, that I may come down and speak with thee. I will take of thy spirit, and will give to them, that they may bear with thee the burden of the people, and that thou mayest not be burthened alone.

And thou shalt say to the people: Be ye sanctified: to-morrow you shall eat flesh, not for one day, but even for a month of days; for I have heard you say: 'Who will give us flesh to eat? It was well with us in Egypt.'" Moses said: "There are six hundred thousand footmen of this people, and sayest Thou: 'I will give them flesh to eat a whole month?'" The Lord answered him: "Is the hand of the Lord unable? Thou shalt presently see whether My word shall come to pass or no."

Moses told the people the words which God had spoken to him; and having assembled seventy of the ancients, he made them stand about the Tabernacle; and when the Spirit had rested on them, they prophesied,* and continued to do so afterwards. Now there remained in the camp two of the men, namely, *Eldad* and *Medad*, who, though enrolled by Moses among the elders, had not gone forth to the Tabernacle. Upon these also the Spirit rested; and when they prophesied in the camp, a young man ran to Moses and exclaimed: "Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp." Hearing this, Josue, the minister of Moses, said: "My lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses answered him: "O that all the people might prophesy, and that the Lord would give them His Spirit."

The flight of quails into the camp.

After this, Moses returned into the camp with the ancients of Israel; and God sent a strong wind which carried a countless number of *quails* from beyond the sea, and cast them into the camp, and round about on every side. The quails flew at a height of but two cubits from the ground, so that vast numbers were caught and killed by the people. What they could not eat they salted, and dried in the sun, thus laying by a large store for future use. Having for a whole year been accustomed to live upon manna, which

* They discoursed in such a holy and enthusiastic manner that all could recognise the influence of the Holy Spirit.

was a light food, and now eating greedily of flesh, they were smitten by God with a severe plague in punishment of their gluttony, and great numbers of them died. The spot in which they were buried was named *The Graves of Lust.*

orm of essing.

While the chosen people were encamped under the shadow of Sinai, Moses was taught by God the words to be used by Aaron and his sons when they blessed the people: "Thus shall you bless the children of Israel, and you shall say to them: *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord show His face to thee and have mercy on thee. The Lord turn His countenance to thee, and give thee peace.* And they shall invoke My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" (Num. vi. 23-27).

CHAPTER XXXI

AARON AND MARY MURMUR AGAINST MOSES—THE TWELVE SPIES

ron and ary speak ainst Moses.

THE Israelites next journeyed as far as *Haseroth*, where they encamped. Here Moses experienced a most painful trial, a trial the more bitter as it came from his own brother and sister. Aaron and Mary spoke against Moses because of his wife the Ethiopian, and demanded: "Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? Hath He not also spoken to us in like manner?" When the Lord heard this—"for Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth"—He immediately bade him and Aaron and Mary proceed to the Tabernacle of the Testimony. As they went out, the Lord descended in the Pillar of the Cloud, and standing in the entry of the Tabernacle, called to Aaron and Mary: "Hear My words: If there be among

you a prophet of the Lord, I will speak to him in a vision or in a dream. But it is not so with My servant Moses, who is most faithful in all My house; for I speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak ill of My servant Moses?" Then being angry with them, He went away, and the Cloud also that was over the Tabernacle departed; and behold Mary appeared white as snow with a leprosy.

Mary a leper.

When Aaron saw her thus disfigured, he humbled himself, and entreated Moses, saying: "I beseech thee, my lord, lay not upon us this sin which we have foolishly committed; let her not be as one dead. Lo, now one half of her flesh is consumed with the leprosy." Moved with pity, Moses cried to the Lord: "O God, I beseech Thee, heal her." The Lord answered him: "If her father had spitten upon her face, ought she not to have been ashamed for seven days at least? Let her be separated seven days without the camp, and afterwards she shall be called again." Mary, therefore, was put out of the camp seven days, and the people moved not from that place until she was called again.

The force of the reply given by Almighty God to Moses is very obvious. If a father had been so irritated by his daughter as to show his indignation in the strongest manner, she would surely keep out of his sight for a time. Could Mary, then, complain if God, who was more than her father, and who had been more injured in the person of His minister, covered her with the leprosy, and excluded her from society seven days?

Spies chosen to view the land of Chanaan.

After the judgment sent upon Mary had been removed, and the days of her penance completed, the Israelites marched from Haseroth and pitched their tents in the desert of Pharan, at Cades, on the very borders of the Land of Promise. Here

God spoke to Moses, and bade him choose twelve men, one from each tribe, to go as spies to inspect the land of Chanaan, which He had promised to give the children of Israel for a possession. Moses, accordingly, selected twelve of the rulers of the people and said to them: "Go you up by the south side. And when you shall come to the mountains, view the land, of what sort it is, and the people that are the inhabitants thereof, whether they be strong or weak, few in number or many; the land itself, whether it be good or bad, woody or without trees; what manner of cities, walled or without walls. Be of good courage, and bring us of the fruits of the land."

Among those chosen to act as spies were *Caleb*, of the tribe of Juda, and *Osee*, of the tribe of Ephraim, whose name Moses changed to *Josue* (*Saviour*). Josue was to be a striking figure of our Blessed Saviour, as Moses foresaw; he was to be the happy instrument, in the hand of God, of saving the Israelites, by introducing them into the Land of Promise and establishing them therein in peace.

The spies are sent out.

The spies, setting out from Cades at the time when the grapes were ripe, went and viewed the land from the Desert of Sin as far as Rohob, which is situated at the foot of Mount Libanus and on the road to Emath. They reached Rohob by the banks of the Jordan, and returned by the confines of the Sidonians and the Philistines, through Hebron, to the camp at Cades, after an absence of forty days. Hebron had been founded by Enac; and at this time all the neighbourhood round about was inhabited by his descendants, who were men of gigantic stature. From a valley near the city the spies gathered pomegranates, and figs, and a cluster of grapes so large that it had to be borne on a staff by two men. It was from this circumstance that they named the place *Nehelescol*, that is to say, *the Torrent of the Cluster of Grapes.*

The report brought back by the spies.

On their return they came to Moses and Aaron, and speaking to them and to all the multitude, showed them the fruits which they had brought back with them. "The land," they said, "in very deed floweth with milk and honey, as may be known by these fruits; but it hath very strong inhabitants, and the cities are great and walled. We saw there the race of Enac. Amalec dwelleth in the south; the Hethite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorrhite in the mountains; but the Chanaanite abideth by the sea and near the streams of the Jordan." Thereupon, to still the murmuring of the people that rose against Moses, Caleb said: "Let us go up and possess the land, for we shall be able to conquer it." The other spies, however, exclaimed: "No, we are not able to go up to this people, because they are stronger than we. The land which we have viewed devoureth its inhabitants, and the people that we beheld are of tall stature. There we saw certain monsters of the sons of Enac, of the giant kind, in comparison with whom we seemed like locusts."

The people murmur against Moses.

Then the whole multitude wept, and murmured against Moses, exclaiming: "Would to God that we had died in Egypt, and that we may die in this vast wilderness, that the Lord may not bring us into this land, lest we fall by the sword, and our wives and children be led away captives. Is it not better to return into Egypt? Let us appoint a captain, and let us return thither."

Fidelity of Josue and Caleb.

When Moses and Aaron heard this, they fell down flat upon the ground before the multitude of the children of Israel; but *Josue* and *Caleb* rent their garments, and said to the people: "The land which we have gone round is very good. If the Lord be favourable, He will bring us into it, and give us a land flowing with milk and honey. Be not rebellious

against the Lord, and fear not the people of this land, for we are able to destroy them. All aid is gone from them: the Lord is with us, fear ye not." But the multitude cried out the more, and would have stoned them, had not the glory of the Lord suddenly appeared over the Tabernacle of the Covenant to all the people of Israel. Then did God pronounce a terrible judgment. Calling Moses, He said to him: "How long will this people detract Me? How long will they not believe Me for all the signs that I have wrought before them? I will strike them, therefore, with pestilence, and will consume them; but thee I will make a ruler over a great nation, and a mightier than this is."

Moses intercedes for the people.

Filled with pity for his people, Moses implored the Lord, saying: "Forgive them, I beseech Thee, according to the greatness of Thy mercy, as Thou hast been merciful to them from their going out of Egypt unto their coming into this place." God answered him: "I have forgiven them according to thy word, as I live; yet all the men that have seen My majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now ten times, and have not obeyed My voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that hath detracted Me behold it. My servant Caleb, who, being full of another spirit, hath followed Me, I will bring into this land. I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Say therefore to them that, according as they have spoken in My hearing, so will I do to them. In the wilderness shall they die. Of all those who have attained the twentieth year and have murmured against Me, not one shall enter into the land, except *Caleb*, the son of Jephone, and *Josue*, the son of Nun: but their children will I bring in, that these may see the land which they have despised. Their children shall wander in the

desert forty years: according to the number of the forty days wherein they viewed the land, a year shall be counted for a day. As I have spoken, so will I do to this wicked multitude that hath risen up against Me; in this wilderness shall they faint away and die." Then, to convince the people of the severity with which He had determined to carry out the sentence pronounced against them, Almighty God immediately struck dead the ten faithless spies who, on their return, had made the whole multitude to murmur against Him.

The ten faithless spies are struck dead.

The people now began to mourn and lament, but all too late; for Moses had already been commanded by God to remove the camp, and to return into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. Thinking yet to frustrate God's decree, they resolved to seize the land even against His will, and in spite of the warnings of Moses. Rising up very early in the morning, they went to the top of the mountain, fully determined to advance; but the Ark of the Testament departed not from the camp, nor did Moses accompany them. Blinded with presumption, and puffed up with pride, they ascended; but the enemy was ready to receive them. Abandoned by God, and by Moses and Aaron, by Josue and Caleb, and other men of virtue and sense, they fell an easy prey to the Amalecites and the Chanaanites, who, falling upon them with fury, defeated them, and pursued them with great slaughter as far as Horma (*The Curse*). Thus, by woeful experience, they began at length to realise that God would keep His word.

The people determine to frustrate God's decree.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE REBELLION OF CORE, DATHAN, AND ABIRON, B.C. 1490

During the time that the Israelites were encamped at Cades, there occurred another revolt which called down upon its guilty authors the just retribution of an offended God. The crime was that of rebellion against the authority, spiritual and temporal, established by God among His people; the crime, too, of pretending to the Priesthood by such as had not been duly called and sent.

Core, of the tribe of Levi, with *Dathan* and *Abiron*, of the tribe of Ruben, and two hundred and fifty chiefs of the Israelites, rose up against Moses and Aaron, and claimed equality with Moses and the priests, not only for themselves, but for the whole congregation of Israel. They thus addressed themselves to Moses and Aaron: "Let it be enough for you that all the multitude consisteth of holy ones, and the Lord is among them: why lift you up yourselves above the people of the Lord?" When Moses heard this he fell prostrate upon the ground and prayed to God, leaving the decision in His hands. He then rose up and addressed Core and all the multitude in these words: "In the morning the Lord will make known who belong to Him, and the holy He will join to Himself, and those whom He shall choose shall approach Him. Take every man of you your censers, thou Core, and all thy company, and putting fire in them to-morrow, put incense upon it before the Lord; and whomsoever He shall choose, the same shall be holy: you take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. Is it a small thing that the God of Israel hath separated you from all the people, and joined you to Himself, that you should serve Him in the

The schism of Core, Dathan, and Abiron.

service of the Tabernacle, and should minister to Him? Did He therefore make you to approach unto Him, that you should challenge to yourselves the Priesthood also?"

Moses next sent for Dathan and Abiron, but they refused to come. Then turning to Core, he said: "Do thou and thy congregation stand apart before the Lord to-morrow, and Aaron apart, each holding his censer." After this had been done, fire came out from the Lord and destroyed Core and the two hundred and fifty that offered incense with him, while Aaron alone was untouched by the fire.

Core consumed by fire.

The glory of the Lord appeared to all, and Moses was commanded to separate the whole people from the tents of Core, Dathan, and Abiron. He accordingly directed the multitude to depart from the tents of those wicked men, and not to touch anything belonging to them, lest they, too, should be involved in their sins. As Dathan and Abiron stood in the entry of their pavilions with their wives and children, Moses turned to the people and said: "By this you shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all things that you see. If these men die the common death of men, and if they be visited with a plague wherewith others also are wont to be visited, the Lord did not send me; but if the Lord do a new thing, and the earth, opening her mouth, swallow them down, and all things that belong to them, and they go down alive into hell, you shall know that they have blasphemed the Lord." Immediately the earth broke asunder under the feet of these guilty men, and engulfed them, together with their tents and all their substance. The ground closed over them, and thus they went down alive into hell, and perished from among the people. Their cries struck terror into those who were standing around, and caused them in alarm to hurry from the spot, lest they, too, might perish.

The earth swallows up Dathan and Abiron.

To deter others from imitating the example of Core and his followers, Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was commanded to gather up the censers of those that had perished from fire, because they were sanctified by the incense that had been offered in them. These he was to beat into plates and fasten to the altar where they were to remain for a sign and a memorial that no stranger, or anyone who was not of the family of Aaron, should come near to offer incense to the Lord, or rashly pretend to the Priesthood.

The princes of Ruben, led by Dathan and Abiron, were desirous of obtaining the temporal power only, but the Levites who joined Core aspired to that sacred pre-eminence which had been given by God to Aaron and his sons. If those be so severely punished who rise up in opposition to lawful superiors, either in Church or State, what punishment do they not merit who deny God Himself by calling in question His most sacred truths?

Moses and Aaron blamed for the destruction of Core and his followers.

The people now murmured against Moses and Aaron because of the fate of so many of their companions, and upbraided them with being the cause of their destruction. The tumult increased to such an extent that the two brothers fled to the Tabernacle; and when they had gone in, the Cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. God said to Moses: "Get you out from the midst of this multitude: this moment will I destroy them." But Moses again strove to obtain pardon for the people and to save them. He said to Aaron: "Take the censer, and putting fire in it from the altar, put incense upon it, and go quickly to the people to pray for them; for already wrath is gone out from the Lord, and the plague rageth." When Aaron had done this, and had run to the midst of the multitude whom the burning fire was now destroying, he offered the incense, and standing between the living and the dead, he prayed for the people,

and the scourge ceased. The number of those that perished was 14,700, besides those that had been destroyed in the sedition of Core.

Aaron's rod blossoms.

To give yet another proof that Aaron and his sons had been chosen to the Priesthood, God commanded Moses to take twelve rods, in addition to that of Aaron, a rod for each tribe, with the names of the respective tribes inscribed upon them. The rod representing the tribe of Levi bore the name of Aaron. These were laid up in the Tabernacle, with the promise of God that the rod of the one whom He had chosen for the Priesthood should blossom. On the following morning Moses returned to the Tabernacle, when he found that Aaron's rod, which had been cut out of almond-wood, was covered not only with buds and blossoms, but with leaves and full-grown almonds. As to the rest of the rods, they were found dry and unchanged, as at first. The Lord now said to Moses: "Carry back the rod of Aaron into the Tabernacle of the Testimony, that it may be kept there for a token of the rebellious children of Israel, and that their complaints may cease from Me, lest they die."

The fringes to be worn on the garments.

Another injunction which God gave to the Israelites, while still in the desert, was that with regard to the making of fringes for their cloaks. "Speak to the children of Israel," He said, "and thou shalt tell them to make themselves fringes in the corners of their garments, putting in them ribands of blue; that when they shall see them, they may remember all the commandments of the Lord, and not follow their own thoughts and eyes, going astray after divers things, but rather being mindful of the precepts of the Lord, may do them, and be holy to their God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that I might be your God."

CHAPTER XXXIII

SIN OF MOSES AND AARON—DEATH OF AARON. B.C. 1452

The Israelites return to the wilderness.

As God had commanded, the Israelites again turned back into the wilderness of Pharan by the way of the Red Sea, and began those long years of penance which their murmurings and want of confidence in the Divine protection had brought upon them. What occurred during this period we know not, except that the sentence pronounced by Almighty God—"*Of all those who have attained the twentieth year and have murmured against Me, not one shall enter into the land, except Josue and Caleb*"—was carried out to the very letter.

Death of Mary, the sister of Moses.

When the time of their punishment was drawing to a close, Moses once more led the people to the borders of the Promised Land, and again they assembled at Cades. Here it was that Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died and was buried at the age of 130. Her life had been an eventful one. While she was yet a girl, we have seen her watching over Moses when he was exposed in a basket of bulrushes on the banks of the Nile, and assisting in his deliverance by procuring for him a nurse in the person of his own mother. And again, on the shore of the Red Sea, after the Israelites had crossed dry-shod, and had escaped from the pursuing Egyptians, we find her leading the canticle of praise and thanksgiving to God for His mercy towards them. She died without being permitted to enter the Promised Land, a punishment she had incurred on account of her murmuring against Moses.

Grieved as Moses was for the death of Mary, yet was he still more distressed by reason of the obstinacy of the people. When water once more failed, they came together

against Moses and Aaron, exclaiming insolently: "Would to God we had perished among our brethren before the Lord. Why have you brought us out into the wilderness, that both we and our cattle should die? Why have you made us come up out of Egypt, and have brought us into this wretched place, which cannot be sowed, nor bringeth forth figs nor vines, neither is there any water to drink?" In his affliction, Moses prostrated himself before the Tabernacle and prayed thus: "O Lord God, hear the cry of this people, and open to them Thy treasure, a fountain of living water, that, being satisfied, they may cease to murmur." The Lord answered him: "Take the rod, and assemble the people together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and *speak to the rock* before them, and it shall yield waters. And when thou hast brought forth water out of the rock, all the multitude and their cattle shall drink." As he had been commanded, Moses gathered together the multitude before the rock and said to them: "Hear, ye rebellious and incredulous: can *we* bring you forth water out of this rock?"—and he *struck the rock twice* with the rod. The water gushed forth in great abundance, and the people and their cattle drank.

Water issues from the rock.

But God was displeased with Moses and Aaron for their want of confidence and weakness of faith, and told them that, because they had not believed Him, and honoured Him before the children of Israel, they should not lead the people into the land which He had promised to give them. In memory of the murmuring of the people, God Himself named the place *Meribah* (*The Water of Contradiction*).

The sin of Moses and Aaron.

St. Augustine does not think Moses and Aaron guilty of any grievous sin. They did not disbelieve God's power or veracity, but were guilty of a certain diffidence, and probably feared the unworthiness of a rebellious people.

The king of Edom refuses a passage to the Israelites.

Although Moses himself was not to enter the Promised Land, still was he ready to lead the people forward to the end of their wanderings. He accordingly sent messengers from Cades to the king of Edom, reminding him that the Israelites were the brethren of the Edomites, and requesting him to grant them permission to pass through his country. A promise was given to the king that the Israelites would not go through the fields, nor through the vineyards, and that they would not drink the waters of the wells, but would go by the common highway, turning aside neither to the right nor to the left until they were past his borders. The reply of the king was haughty and threatening: "Thou shalt not pass by me: if thou dost, I will come out armed against thee." And immediately he came forth to oppose them with a strong band. Once more the Israelites had to retrace their steps southward as far as the eastern arm of the Red Sea, that is, to the Gulf of Akaba, where they turned north, keeping the land of Edom on their left.

When they had proceeded as far as Mount Hor, Almighty God appeared to Moses and said: "Aaron shall not go into the land which I have given the children of Israel, because he was incredulous to My words at the Waters of Contradiction. Take him, therefore, and his son with him, and bring them up into Mount Hor. And when thou hast stripped the father of his robes, thou shalt vest therewith Eleazar, his son: Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and die there."

Moses did as the Lord had commanded, and they went up into the Mount before all the multitude. And when he had stripped Aaron of his priestly robes, and had vested Eleazar with them, there, almost within sight of the Promised Land, the High Priest died, in the 123rd year of his age. There,

eath of ron.

too, he was buried; and when the people heard that he was no more, they mourned for him thirty days throughout all their families. Of his four sons, two survived him, viz., Eleazar and Ithamar; the two elder, Nadab and Abiu, had been struck dead, as we have seen, for offering *strange fire* before the Lord.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FIERY SERPENTS—THE PROPHET BALAAM

After the days of mourning for the death of Aaron were passed, the Israelites recommenced their march, and were attacked by king Arad, the Chanaanite, who dwelt towards the south. Arad, coming suddenly upon them, was so far successful at first that he managed to carry off a considerable amount of plunder; but the Israelites bound themselves by vow that, if God would deliver these Chanaanites into their hands, they would utterly destroy their cities. God granted their request. They defeated Arad, destroyed the cities of the Chanaanites, and, in memory of the event, called the place *Horma*, that is to say, *Destruction*.

King Arad is overcome.

The Israelites next marched by the way leading to the Red Sea, that thus they might avoid having to pass through the land of Edom. Becoming discouraged, and growing weary of their journey, they again began to utter bitter complaint against Moses. "Why," they exclaimed, "didst thou bring us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread, nor have we any waters: our soul now loatheth this very light food." To punish their murmuring, God sent amongst them fiery serpents, whose bite caused a violent heat, and was so terrible that many of them perished. Filled with terror, the survivors fled to Moses

The fiery serpents.

acknowledging their sin in having spoken against the Lord and against him, and entreating to be delivered from the terrible affliction which had befallen them. He was moved with pity for their sufferings, and, in answer to his earnest prayer for mercy, God said to him: "Make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: whosoever, being struck, shall look on it, shall live." Moses hastened to carry out the Divine command; and when they that were bitten looked upon the brazen serpent, they were healed. In this we have a figure of Christ crucified; for to gaze on Him with a lively faith is a most efficacious remedy against the bites of the hellish serpent, the Devil.

Defeat of Sehon, king of the Amorrhites.

After journeying as far south as the Red Sea, the march of the Israelites turned in a northerly direction along the eastern borders of the Edomites, till they came to the torrent of Zared which flows into the Dead Sea at the south-east corner. Having crossed the Zared, they next encamped on the south bank of the Arnon, a river flowing from the east into the Dead Sea, and separating the Moabites from the Amorrhites, who dwelt to the north-east. It was while they were encamped here that the Israelites sent to ask leave of Sehon, king of the Amorrhites, to pass peaceably through his dominions. The king not only refused their request, but having assembled his forces, marched forth to meet them, so as to prevent their passage. Encouraged by the promise of God that He would deliver Sehon into their hands, the Israelites forcibly crossed the river, and attacked and routed the Amorrhites with great slaughter. The king himself was killed, his cities were taken, and his cattle seized.

The next opposition they met with was from Og, the giant king of Basan, who also was an Amorrhite, and ruled over the country a little farther to the north. Og, with all his people, came out to oppose the Israelites at Edrai.

Here God appeared to Moses and said: "Fear him not, for I have delivered him, and all his people, and his country, into thy hand, and thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sehon." The victory, according to the Divine promise, fell to the Israelites. Og was slain, his people also perished, and his lands were taken possession of. And now the Israelites held the country lying to the east of the Jordan.

Og defeated.

After the victory over Og, Moses led the people to the Jordan, and encamped in the great plain over against Jericho. Balac, king of the Moabites, seeing all that Israel had done to the Amorrhites, and that his own people were in great fear, said to the elders of the Madianites, his neighbours: "So will this people destroy all that dwell in our borders, as the ox is wont to eat the grass to the very roots." He therefore sent messengers to Balaam, a famous prophet, who dwelt in Mesopotamia by the banks of the river Euphrates, offering him great rewards if he would come and call down curses on the Israelites.

Moses reaches the Jordan.

The fame of Balaam was spread far and wide, as is shown from the fact that such a distant king as Balac trusted more to the powers of this prophet than to all the efforts of his own armies and those of his allies. "Behold," ran the message, "a people is come out of Egypt that hath covered the face of the earth, sitting over against me. Come, therefore, and curse this people, because it is mightier than I; for I know that he whom thou shalt bless is blessed, and he whom thou shalt curse is cursed." Those who carried the message were also accompanied by rich presents, by means of which the king hoped to secure the favour of the prophet. When they were come to Balaam, and had delivered their message, he bade them remain with him that night, and promised that in the morning he would answer whatsoever the Lord should

The prophet Balaam.

say to him. During the night God made known His will to the prophet: "What mean these men that are with thee? Thou shalt not go with them, nor shalt thou curse the people, because it is blessed." Next morning Balaam called the king's messengers to him, and bade them return into their own country by themselves, as the Lord had expressly forbidden him to accompany them.

King Balac and Balaam.

This unfavourable reply did not discourage the king, and he again sent messengers more numerous and more noble than he had sent before. Having come to Balaam, they addressed him in these words: "Thus saith Balac, the son of Sephor: 'Delay not to come to me, for I am ready to honour thee, and will give thee whatsoever thou wilt: come and curse this people.'" Balaam answered: "If Balac would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot alter the word of the Lord my God, to speak either more or less. I pray you to stay here this night also, that I may know what the Lord will answer me once more." God again appeared to Balaam in the night and said to him: "If these men be come to call thee, arise and go with them; yet so that thou do what I shall command thee." Balaam arose in the morning, and saddling his ass, went with them, accompanied by two servants.

alaam rebuked y an angel.

As they went on their journey, an angel of the Lord stood in the way with a drawn sword in his hand, unperceived by Balaam; but the ass, startled at the sight, turned aside out of the way, and ran into a field to avoid him. Not understanding why she had done this, Balaam beat her, and tried to bring her back again into the road, which, a little further on, was bounded by a wall on either side. In the narrow passage between the two walls stood the angel, and here again Balaam tried in vain to urge the ass forward. In her efforts to avoid the angel, the ass crushed Balaam's foot

against the wall, and was again severely beaten for her supposed stubbornness. At last, in her struggle to escape, she fell under her master, who, in a transport of rage, struck her more unmercifully than ever. Then, to convince Balaam of his cruelty and folly, God worked a most wonderful miracle. He opened the mouth of the ass, whereupon she thus reproached Balaam for his unmerciful treatment of her: "What have I done to thee? Why strikest thou me, lo, now this third time?" Balaam answered: "Because thou hast deserved it, and hast served me ill: I would I had a sword that I might kill thee." The ass said: "Am I not thy beast on which thou hast always been accustomed to ride until the present day? Tell me if I ever did the like thing to thee." Then were Balaam's eyes opened, and he saw the angel standing in the way with a drawn sword, ready to kill him. At once he prostrated himself before the angel, who said to him: "Why beatest thou thy ass these three times? I am come to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse and contrary to me. Unless the ass had turned out of the way, giving place to me who stood against thee, I had slain thee, and she should have lived." Balaam replied: "I have sinned, not knowing that thou didst stand against me: and now if it displease thee that I go, I will return." The angel said: "Go with these men, and see thou speak no other thing than what I command thee."

Balac requests Balaam to curse Israel.

When the king heard that Balaam was approaching, he went out to meet him, and conducted him to a high place on which was a temple dedicated to the false god Baal, and from which the whole camp of Israel could be distinctly viewed. Here Balaam caused seven altars to be set up, and gave order that as many calves and the same number of rams should be prepared for sacrifice. He then retired to consult the Divine will, promising to speak whatever God should

command. On his return, finding Balac standing by his burnt-offering, with all the princes of the Moabites, he said to him: "Balac, king of the Moabites, hath brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east: 'Come,' said he, 'and curse Jacob: make haste and detest Israel.' How shall I curse him whom God hath not cursed? By what means should I detest him whom the Lord detesteth not? Who can count the dust of Jacob, and know the number of the stock of Israel? Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them." Balac upbraided him for having uttered a blessing, instead of a curse, upon his enemies; but Balaam answered: "Can I speak anything else but what the Lord commandeth?"

Three times were sacrifices offered, and as often did Balaam utter blessings on the people of God. Setting his face towards the desert, and lifting up his eyes, he saw Israel abiding in their tents, by their tribes; and the Spirit of God coming upon him, he exclaimed: "How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As woody valleys, as watered gardens near the rivers, as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched, as cedars by the water-side. He that blesseth thee shall also himself be blessed: he that curseth thee shall be reckoned accursed."

Balaam is constrained to utter blessings.

Balac at length became very angry, and complained bitterly of the conduct of Balaam. He bade him depart from the territory of Moab, telling him that he had indeed determined greatly to honour him, but that the Lord had deprived him of the reward intended for him. Balaam heeded not the chidings of the king, but at once broke out into the words of that beautiful prophecy concerning the Messias: "*A Star shall rise out of Jacob*, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel. . . . Out of Jacob shall He come that shall rule. . . ." (Num. xxiv. 17).

Balaam's prophecy.

Balaam still lingered among the Madianites, the neighbours of the Moabites, and advised them to join with the children of Moab in an earnest endeavour to corrupt the Israelites, and thus bring down upon them the anger of God. By his advice the women of the Moabites and the Madianites were instructed to go freely to the Israelites, who were then encamped at Setim; and after they had succeeded in winning their affections, they were to persuade them to leave off their obedience to their own laws and the worship of their own God, and to join with them in the worship of the gods of the Madianites and the Moabites. For this, God would be angry with them, and would withdraw His favour and protection from them. This wicked plan succeeded only too well. The festival of Beelphegor, an obscene idol of the Moabites, was at hand, and was celebrated with all manner of licentiousness. Led astray by the wicked device of Balaam, great numbers of the Israelites, at the request of the Madianite women, joined in the sacrifices to the false god, and defiled both soul and body by their criminal excesses.

The people fall into idolatry.

When Moses saw the Israelites thus give themselves up to the superstitious rites of the heathen gods, his heart was filled with grief and sorrow; and at the command of God, he ordered the guilty ones to be slain. At the same time a plague broke out, and four-and-twenty-thousand perished. Phinees, the son of Eleazar, the High Priest, distinguished himself on this occasion by his zeal. Fired with anger at seeing Zambri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, lead into the camp of the Israelites a Madianite woman named Cozbi, in the very sight of Moses and all the people who were weeping before the door of the Tabernacle, he took a dagger and slew them both. God was pleased with Phinees, and bade Moses say to him: "Behold I give him

The zeal of Phinees.

the peace of My Covenant, and the covenant of the Priesthood for ever shall be to him and his seed, because he hath been zealous for his God, and hath made atonement for the wickedness of the children of Israel."

CHAPTER XXXV

WAR WITH THE MADIANITES

New census.

A TERRIBLE vengeance was yet to befall the Madianites for having led God's people into sin, and for having withdrawn them from their allegiance to Him. Before war was made upon these wicked people, Moses and the High Priest, Eleazar, were ordered to take a second census of the children of Israel, when it was found that, excluding the tribe of Levi, the number of those able to bear arms amounted to 601,730, thus showing a decrease of 1,820 on the previous census taken thirteen months after the departure from Egypt. This was not to be wondered at, when we consider how many had brought destruction upon themselves by their frequent murmurings during the time of their sojourn in the desert.

The tribes of Israel.

This second numbering was taken so that it might be known what forces could be assembled to attack the nations of Chanaan on the west side of the Jordan, and also in order that the promised lands might be properly distributed. In all, there were thirteen tribes, which took their names respectively from the sons of Jacob, except the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasses, which were called after the two sons of Joseph. The names, then, of the twelve tribes from which the fighting men were drawn were—*Ruben*, *Simeon*, *Juda*, *Issachar*, *Zabulon*, *Ephraim*, *Manasses*, *Benjamin*, *Dan*, *Aser*, *Gad*, *Nephtali*, the tribe of *Levi* being set apart, as we have seen, for the Priesthood and for the ministry of

the Tabernacle. To this tribe no allotment was to be made in the land when they entered into Chanaan; but they were to live dispersed among the other tribes in the forty-eight cities granted to them by the rest, in proportion to the number of cities possessed by each of the twelve tribes. Moreover, for their support, they were to receive tithes of all the land and cattle. Of their forty-eight cities, six were to be *Cities of Refuge.**

The time was now drawing near when the holy lawgiver must die; but his death was not to take place before the doom pronounced against the Madianites had been executed. The Lord appeared to him and said: "Revenge first the children of Israel on the Madianites, and so thou shalt be gathered to thy people." At once Moses gave orders that 1,000 picked men should be chosen out of each tribe; and thus a body of 12,000 of the most valiant of the people, at the sound of the silver trumpets, marched out, under the command of Phinees, to take the revenge of the Lord on the Madianites.

They attacked the enemy and utterly routed them. All the men, together with their princes, and Balaam himself, who was still sojourning amongst them, were put to the sword, the women and children were taken captives, their cattle and goods seized, their possessions plundered, and their cities, villages, and strongholds burnt to the ground. As the victors returned to the camp, Moses and Eleazar and all the princes of the synagogue went forth to meet them; but when Moses found that the women had been spared, he was angry with the chief officers and said:

Slaughter of the Madianites.

* These were *Cedes, Sichem, Hebron, Golan* or *Gaulon, Ramoth Galaad,* and *Bosor.* To one of these the man-slayer, who had killed another accidentally, might flee for refuge until his case had been lawfully inquired into. To expedite the fugitive, the roads leading to these cities were required to be kept in good repair. The Altar of Holocausts and the Temple enjoyed the like privilege.

"Are not these they that deceived the children of Israel by the counsel of Balaam, and made you transgress against the Lord, for which also the people were punished?" He then commanded all but the girls, and the young women who had had no share in the guilt, to be put to death without mercy.

Settlement of Reuben and Gad.

After the victory gained by Israel over the Madianites, the tribes of Ruben and Gad requested Moses and the elders that they should be allowed to settle in the lands on the east side of the Jordan, conquered from the Moabites and the Madianites. These lands were especially suitable for grazing purposes, affording, as they did, rich pasturage for cattle; and as the children of Ruben and Gad in particular possessed large flocks and herds, they desired these lands to be given to them as their portion. At first Moses was angry with them, imagining it to be their intention to shirk the task which still lay before the Israelites of subduing the country lying on the west of the Jordan. But when they assured him that such was not their intention, he gave his consent, on their solemnly promising that, after they had seen to the safety of their families and possessions, they would march with their brethren to the conquest of Chanaan, and would not return till all the country was subdued, nor ask for themselves any further share in the land. On like conditions, half of the tribe of Manasses received as their portion the country of Basan.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

This Book is called *Deuteronomy* (*deuteros,* second, and *nomos,* law), because it repeats the ordinances given on Mount Sinai, besides adding other precepts not given before. It consists chiefly of discourses made by Moses to the people shortly before his death, and contains the *Canticle* of Moses, his blessing of the tribes, and the account of his death on Mount Nebo.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE DEATH OF MOSES, B.C. 1451

When at length Moses had brought the children of Israel in sight of the Jordan, which he knew he was not to cross, God appeared to him and said: "Go up into this mountain, Abarim, and thence view the land which I will give to the children of Israel. And when thou shalt have seen it, thou also shalt go to thy people, as thy brother Aaron is gone." Moses answered Him: "May the Lord provide over this multitude a man who may lead them out or bring them in, lest the people of the Lord be as sheep without a shepherd." The Lord said to him: "Take Josue, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and put thy hand upon him. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest and all the multitude, and thou shalt give him precepts in the sight of all, and part of thy glory, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may hear him. If anything be to be done, Eleazar the priest shall consult the Lord for him. He, and all the children of Israel with him, and the rest of the multitude, shall go in and go out at his word." Then Moses, laying his hand on Josue's head, repeated all the things that the Lord had commanded.

Josue is appointed to succeed Moses.

Final exhortations of Moses.

Shortly before his death, Moses, as we read in *Deuteronomy*, assembled the people, and, in their presence, rehearsed all that had passed from the time of their leaving Egypt. He reminded them of their conduct during that period, their frequent murmurings, and God's dealings with them. After he had again repeated the law to them, and God's promises if only they remained faithful to Him, he spoke these words: "I am this day 120 years old: I can no longer go out and come in, especially as the Lord also hath said to me: 'Thou shalt not pass over this Jordan.' Josue shall go over before you, as the Lord hath spoken. Do manfully, and be of good heart: fear not, nor be ye dismayed: for the Lord your God Himself is your leader, and will not leave you nor forsake you." To Josue he said, in the presence of all Israel: "Take courage, and be valiant; for thou shalt bring this people into the land which the Lord swore He would give to their fathers, and thou shalt divide it by lot. The Lord will be with thee."

Canticle of Moses.

He next spoke, in the hearing of all the people, the words of a canticle, which they were enjoined to learn for the remembrance of the law. As though to impress upon the minds of his hearers that the truths he is going to utter ought never to be forgotten, he calls on the heavens and the earth, as things which never die, to witness what he asserts: "Hear, O ye heavens, the things which I speak, let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. Let my doctrine gather as the rain, let my speech distil as the dew, as a shower upon the herb, and as drops upon the grass. Because I will invoke the name of the Lord: give ye magnificence to our God. The works of God are perfect, and all His ways are judgments: God is faithful and without any iniquity, He is just and right" (Deut. xxxii. 1-4). The canticle next goes on to draw a contrast between God's mercies and

the iniquities of the people, shows the nothingness and helplessness of false gods, and declares the might of Him who alone is God: "Where are their gods in whom they trusted? Let them arise and help you, and protect you in your distress. See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me: I will kill, and I will make to live: I will strike, and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of My hand. I will lift up My hand to heaven, and I will say: 'I live for ever.' If I shall whet My sword as the lightning, and My hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay them that hate Me."

After he had concluded the canticle, Moses exhorted the people to a faithful observance of the law: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify to you this day. You shall command your children to observe and to fulfil all the things that are written in this law, for they are not commanded you in vain, but that every one should live in them, and that doing them you may continue a long time in the land."

The law to be faithfully observed.

Then the holy man, having solemnly blessed the twelve tribes, went up from the plains of Moab to the top of Phasga, the highest part of Nebo, which itself was a summit of the Abarim mountains. Here God appeared to him for the last time on earth, "and showed him all the land of Galaad, as far as Dan; and all Nephtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasses, and all the land of Juda unto the furthermost sea." He showed him also the south part, and the plain of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, as far as Segor, after which He said to him: "This is the land for which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying 'I will give it to thy seed.' Thou hast seen it with thy eyes, and shalt not pass over to it." And Moses, the

Moses dies at the age of 120 years, B.C. 1451.

servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord, who buried him in the valley of the land of Moab, over against Phogor, and no man knows the place of his sepulchre. Although he died at the advanced age of 120 years, we are told that his eye was not dim, neither were his teeth moved.

The people obey Josue.

The children of Israel mourned for him thirty days in the plains of Moab, and faithfully obeyed Josue, the son of Nun, who was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him. There no more arose a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

The three periods of the life of Moses.

The 120 years of the life of Moses naturally divide themselves into three parts, each part consisting of 40 years. The first period was spent in the house of Pharao, the second in tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, and the third as leader of the Israelites during their forty years' sojourn in the desert.

The character of Moses.

No prophet in the old law ever appeared with greater dignity than Moses. His highest praise we have from the words of God Himself, who tells us that to other prophets He will appear in a vision or speak to them in a dream, but to His servant Moses, the most faithful in all His house, He will speak mouth to mouth, and that plainly doth Moses see the Lord (Num. xii. 6-8). He stands out with great splendour as teacher, lawgiver, mediator, prophet, ruler of a great though almost ungovernable people, and as a sacred writer of the highest antiquity.

By Divine inspiration he composed the Pentateuch, or the first five Books of the Old Testament, which he entrusted to the Levites to be carefully kept as a testimony by the side of the Ark of the Covenant. The last chapter

of Deuteronomy, in which the death of Moses is related, is generally supposed to have been written by Josue, or by one of the prophets, although Josephus and others believed that, in prophetic vision, he foresaw the circumstances of all that was to happen on Mount Nebo, and so wrote the account of his own death.

PART IV

FROM THE DEATH OF MOSES TO SAUL, THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

B.C. 1451 to B.C. 1095

THE BOOK OF JOSUE

This Book is so named because it contains the history of what passed under Josue, and is commonly supposed to have been written by him. It gives the account of the conquest and division of Chanaan, and Josue's last address and farewell. Josue and Jesus, in the Hebrew, are the same name, and have the same signification, viz., *Saviour*.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE TWO SPIES—PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN, B.C. 1451

After the death of Moses, God spoke to Josue, the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, and said to him:

od's words to osue.

"Arise, and pass over this Jordan, thou and thy people with thee, into the land which I will give to the children of Israel. I will deliver to you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, as I have said to Moses. As I have been with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee. Take courage and be strong: for thou shalt divide by lot to this people the land which I have sworn to give them. Turn not from the law to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest understand all things which thou dost."

Thus directed by Almighty God, Josue began at once to prepare to cross the Jordan. Three days were

spent in making the necessary arrangements; and the tribes of Ruben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasses, were reminded of their promise to Moses not to rest on the east side of the Jordan till the Chanaanites were conquered, and their brethren were peacefully settled in their possessions. At length all was ready for the advance.

Preparations for crossing the Jordan.

In the meantime, Josue had sent two spies to reconnoitre the land, and in particular the city of Jericho. Entering therein, they went into a house situated on the city wall, belonging to a woman named Rahab, and here they determined to remain for the night. Now it chanced to reach the ears of the king of Jericho that two strangers, who had come into the city as spies, were staying at the house of Rahab, and at once he directed his officers to go and seize them and bring them to him. As soon as Rahab became aware of the king's intention, and understood that his messengers were already on their way to her house, she hid the spies under the stalks of flax which happened to be spread out to dry on the flat roof of her house. Scarcely had she concealed the two men when the king's officers came up and demanded their surrender. Rahab, going to the window, addressed the messengers, and told them that certain unknown strangers had indeed supped with her a little before sunset, but that they had departed on their journey only a short while ago, and might even yet be overtaken if pursued with all speed. As the road leading to the fords of the Jordan was the most likely one by which the spies would endeavour to escape, the officers without further delay, set out in all haste; and as soon as they were gone, the city gates were shut.

The two spies.

Rahab then went up to the spies and said: "I know that the Lord hath given this land to you, for the dread of you is fallen upon us, and the inhabitants have lost all

strength. We have heard that the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea at your going in, when you came out of Egypt, and what things you did to the two kings of the Amorrhites, Sehon and Og, whom you slew. When we heard these things we were affrighted, and our heart fainted away, neither did there remain any spirit in us at your coming in; for the Lord your God is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. Now, therefore, swear to me by the Lord that, as I have showed mercy to you, so you will show mercy to my father's house, and give me a true token that you will save my father and mother, my brethren and sisters, and all things that are theirs." They answered her that, when Jericho should fall into their hands, they would spare both her and all that belonged to her, because she had shown mercy to them and had not betrayed them. Before proceeding to let them down with a rope from the window, she bade them go to the mountains, and there lie hid for a time, lest they should meet the officers who had gone in pursuit of them. They promised to comply with her suggestion, and at the same time advised her that, when she perceived the city to be on the point of being taken, she should hang out a scarlet cord from her window, that the commander of the Hebrews, to whom they would make known their promise, might recognise her house and refrain from doing her any injury. The spies made good their escape, and after hiding in the mountains, returned to Josue, and told him all that had befallen them, and of their promise to Rahab.

he spies saved
r Rahab.
heir promise
her.

Early next morning Josue broke up the camp at Setim, and advanced as far as the edge of the Jordan. It was now the time of the harvest, when, in consequence of the melting of the snow upon the mountains, the river is wont to overflow its banks, as the turbid waters pass on in their rapid course to the

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t observed in
ssing.

Dead Sea. God chose this as the occasion for displayin His almighty power, and for giving an opportunity to th Hebrews of manifesting the strength of their faith in Him By command of Josue, heralds were sent through th camp to proclaim: "When you shall see the Ark of th Covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests of th race of Levi carrying it, rise you up also, and follow ther as they go before; and let there be the space of tw thousand cubits* between you and the Ark, that you ma see it afar off, and know which way you must go. Tak care you come not near the Ark." Josue told the peopl to be sanctified, that is, to have their garments washed an their bodies unstained, that so they might be reminded c that interior purity which was required of them; for on th morrow the Lord would do wonders among them.

The passage of the Jordan.

At a given signal the priests took up the Ark an advanced to the edge of the Jordan; and n sooner did their feet touch the water tha the river was divided. The waters tha came down from above stood in one place, and swel ing up like a mountain, were seen afar off; whi those that were below on the left flowed on towar the Dead Sea, thus leaving a dry passage across th bed of the river. Into the midst of this channel th priests advanced, bearing the Ark, and there they remain till all the multitude of Israel had passed dry-shod to th other side. God now said to Josue: "Choose twelve me one of every tribe, and command them to take out of t midst of the Jordan twelve very hard stones, which y shall set up in the place of the camp where you shall pit your tents this night." Accordingly Josue, having select twelve men, directed each to fetch a large stone his shoulders, and to set it up for a memorial of miraculous an event. He next put twelve other sto

* About 3,000 feet.

in the middle of the channel of the Jordan, where the priests had stood that carried the Ark; and when this was done, he commanded the priests to bring forward the Ark. Hardly had those who carried it reached the bank when the waters returned into their channel, and flowed on as before. In the passage of the Jordan we find the Ark marking the way for the people, in place of the Cloud, which had disappeared on the death of Moses.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

FALL OF JERICHO AND THE TAKING OF HAI, B.C. 1451

Circumcision at Galgal.

THE twelve stones taken out of the channel of the Jordan were set up at Galgal, where the Israelites made their first encampment after having crossed the river. It was here, too, that Josue had the ceremony of circumcision performed, which had been omitted during the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness; and it was, moreover, from this circumstance of the circumcision that the place was called *Galgal* (*a rolling away*), because the reproach of the Israelites was now removed.

The Feast of the Passover celebrated.

The passage of the Jordan took place on the tenth of Nisan, and on the fourteenth was kept for the third time the Feast of the Passover. This great solemnity we have seen celebrated for the *first time* in Egypt, and for the *second time* at Sinai, after which it was discontinued till the Israelites took possession of the land of Chanaan, as it was chiefly designed for the time when they should have entered the Land of Promise. On the next day the people ate unleavened bread made of the corn of the land; and from this time the manna ceased, Almighty God indicating

thereby that the days of their wandering had now come to a close. Henceforth they were to live on the produce of the country.

The Chanaanites struck with fear.

When it was noised among the Chanaanites that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the children of Israel till they had passed over, their courage failed them. Even the strong city of Jericho was kept closed and carefully guarded, and no man durst go out or come in through fear.

An angel appears to Josue.

While Josue was revolving in his mind how he should attack Jericho, there suddenly appeared before him an angel in the resemblance of a man with a drawn sword in his hand, who said to him: "I am prince of the host of the Lord, and now I am come: loose thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy." The most minute directions as to how he was to proceed were also given him by the angel in these words: "Behold I have given into thy hands Jericho, and the king thereof, and all the valiant men. Go round about the city all ye fighting men once a day: so shall ye do for six days. And on the seventh day the priests shall take the seven trumpets which are used in the jubilee, and shall go before the Ark of the Covenant: and you shall go about the city seven times, and the priests shall sound the trumpets. And when the voice of the trumpet shall give a longer and broken tune, and shall sound in your ears, all the people shall shout together with a very great shout, and the walls of the city shall fall to the ground, and they shall enter in every one at the place against which they shall stand" (Jos. vi. 2-5). By the Fathers, the angel is considered to have been the archangel St. Michael, the guardian angel of the Israelites, who came in the name of God to assure Josue of success.

The fall of Jericho.

These instructions Josue carried out to the very letter. All the armed men went before the Ark, while the rest of the common people followed, and the sound of the trumpets was heard on all sides. The people were commanded to preserve unbroken silence till the word was given: "Cry and shout!" Once a day for six days they marched round about the city; but on the seventh day they made the circuit seven times, and at the last round Josue gave the command: "Shout! for the Lord hath delivered the city to you." The trumpets pealed forth one long-continued blast, the whole people sent forth a mighty shout, and as the sound thundered in the ears of the multitude, the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. From all sides the Israelites poured into the doomed city, and at the command of Josue, put to death all the inhabitants except Rahab, and all that were with her in the house, because she had shown mercy to the two spies. The oxen even, and the sheep, and the asses, they slew with the sword. The city itself they set on fire, and burnt everything in it except the gold and silver, and vessels of brass and iron, which Josue consecrated to the treasury of the Lord, strictly forbidding the people to keep any of these things for their own use, lest they should be guilty of transgression and all the camp of Israel be under sin. At the same time he uttered this imprecation: "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that shall raise up and build the city of Jericho. In his first-born may he lay the foundation thereof, and in the last of his children set up the gates."

In the third Book of Kings we see the curse literally fulfilled in the case of Hiel, an idolater, who paid no regard to the warning of Josue, but was punished by God for his audacity. All his sons perished while the city was rebuilding, some five centuries after its destruction. "In his days Hiel, of Bethel, built Jericho: in Abiram, his first-born, he

laid its foundations; and in his youngest son, Segub, he set up the gates thereof" (3 Kings xvi. 34).

Israelites defeated before Hai.

From Jericho, Josue sent spies to Hai, a city to the east of Bethel, to examine its situation and to find out its strength. On their return they reported that the place was weakly defended, that it possessed but few inhabitants, and that two or three thousand men would be able with ease to destroy it. Josue, in accordance with their advice, despatched a body of 3,000 to take it. But a great surprise awaited them. No sooner had the detachment come in sight than the enemy, marching forth, fell upon them, and drove them, broken and defeated from the gate, killing thirty-six and putting the rest to flight.

The cause of the disaster.

This disaster filled the whole camp with dismay. Josue and the elders prostrated themselves before the Ark until the evening, and with every mark of grief and sorrow prayed to God, and besought that He would declare to them the reason of the disgrace which had thus befallen His people. "My Lord God," he exclaimed, "what shall I say, seeing Israel turning their backs to their enemies? The Chanaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and, being gathered together, will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth; and what wilt Thou do to Thy great name?" God bade him rise, and told him that Israel had sinned in having transgressed His Covenant by taking some portion of the spoils of Jericho, and hiding it among their goods; and that He would be no more with them till he who was guilty of this wickedness had been slain.

The sin of Achar or Achan.

Next morning Josue assembled the people by their tribes, and when he had cast lots to discover the guilty one, the lot fell upon Juda. When the tribe of Juda was taken by its families, that of Zare was indicated; of the family of Zare the

house of Zabdi was taken; while of the house of Zabdi taken man by man, Achar or Achan, the son of Charmi, was discovered to be the offender. Josue then said to Achar: "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and confess, and tell what thou hast done: hide it not." Achar answered: "Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel; for I saw among the spoils a scarlet garment, exceeding good, and two hundred sicles of silver, and a golden rule of fifty sicles. I coveted them and took them away, and hid them in the ground in the midst of my tent, and the silver I covered with the earth that I dug up."

Achar stoned to death.

Messengers were at once despatched to search the tent of Achar, and the spoils were found in the very spot he had indicated. Then Josue said to him: "Because thou hast troubled us, the Lord trouble thee this day"; and forthwith he gave orders for Achar, together with the silver and the garment and the golden rule, his sons also and his daughters, his oxen and asses and sheep, his tent and all his goods, to be taken to a neighbouring valley, where the people stoned him; and all things that were his were consumed by fire. A great mound of stones was piled over the remains of the deceased, where it stood as a memorial of his sin, and as a warning to all who might be tempted to follow his example. The valley was afterwards known as the valley of *Achor* (*Trouble*).

God's promise to deliver Hai to Josue.

Almighty God, being once more reconciled with His people, said to Josue: "Fear not, nor be thou dismayed: take with thee all the multitude of fighting men, and go up to Hai: behold I have delivered into thy hand the king thereof, and the people, and the city, and the land. Thou shalt do to the city of Hai as thou hast done to Jericho, but the spoils and the cattle you shall take for a prey to yourselves."

The capture of Hai.

In the night Josue marched out from Galgal at the head of his fighting men; but on coming near to Hai, he detached a body of 5,000 men to lie in ambush on the west side of the city, while he and the rest of his army approached in battle array from the north. When the people of Hai saw them advancing, they went out in all haste to meet them, led by their king, and ignorant of the 5,000 ready to fall upon their rear. Elated by their recent success, they went forth as though to certain victory, while the Israelites, with well-dissembled fear, turned their backs and fled. Having by this means succeeded in drawing the enemy away from the city, the Israelites wheeled about and faced them. At the same time Josue gave the signal agreed upon between himself and those who were in ambush, by pointing his shield towards Hai; whereupon, unperceived by the enemy, the 5,000 entered the city and began to set fire to it. The enemy, chancing to look back, saw that their city was in flames, and only when it was too late did they perceive the stratagem which had so well succeeded against them. Thus, finding themselves attacked in front and rear, they became utterly demoralised, and fell an easy prey to the Israelites, who slew them to a man, except their king, whom they took prisoner. The city was plundered and burnt to the ground; the spoil was divided amongst the conquerors; and the king, after being hanged on a gibbet, was buried at the entrance to the city.

CHAPTER XXXIX

RATIFICATION OF THE LAW—THE CONQUEST OF CHANAAN

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e people.

JOSUE, having proceeded thus far in the conquest of Chanaan, thought the time had come to carry out the injunction of Moses regarding the ceremony of solemnly ratifying the Law on Mounts Hebal and Garizim. The scene that followed was most imposing, and calculated to impress the minds of the children of Israel with the deepest awe and reverence for God's word. To these mountains, at the command of Josue, all straightway repaired. Winding up the side of Hebal, half of the tribes took their stand facing Garizim, while the rest of the tribes, ascending Garizim, looked in the direction of Hebal. In the valley between the two mountains was the Ark, attended by priests and Levites; next to them came the ancients, accompanied by the princes and the judges, with Josue at their head. Then Josue built an altar on Hebal to the Lord God of Israel, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded—an altar of unhewn stones, which iron had not touched; and he offered upon it burnt-offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings. He next wrote the Law upon stones, and these he set up as a memorial. Having solemnly blessed all Israel, he directed the Levites to read aloud the blessings and cursings of the Law, as they appear set forth in the Book of Deuteronomy; and to each separate curse and blessing repeated by the Levites the whole multitude responded with a loud and earnest *Amen*.

After this impressive ceremony, the Israelites returned to Galgal. The tidings of Josue's victory over Jericho and Hai having spread to the neighbouring peoples, they,

too, began to be alarmed for their own safety, and to devise means for protecting themselves by uniting their forces, and falling in overwhelming numbers upon Israel, whom they regarded as their common enemy. One city, however, the city of Gabaon, refused to join the league, and resorted to a strange device for securing a separate peace. The Gabaonites sent ambassadors to Josue, who represented to him that they had come from a far-distant country; and that, having heard of his wondrous achievements, and of the power of the God of Israel, they were come to solicit a treaty of peace and friendship. In order to make their story more credible, they cunningly arrayed themselves in old and tattered garments; their shoes were patched and worn; the bread they carried was dry, stale, and mouldy, although they averred that when they left home it was fresh-baked; their wine-skins were torn and patched: all this to show the marks of their long journey, and to delude the unsuspecting Israelites into making an alliance with them.

The deception of the Gabaonites.

Their plan succeeded but too well. Convinced of the truth of their story, and believing that they were not of the Chanaanite nation, Josue, without having first consulted God, entered into a solemn league of friendship with them, and both he and the elders bound themselves by oath not to destroy them. The messengers, having thus secured the object for which they had come, returned home. The Israelites were not long in discovering that they had been duped; for in three days' time they found themselves in the territories of these same people, who, they thought, dwelt in a far-off country.

The deceit detected.

Loud murmurings were now heard on all sides, and the people demanded that the impostors should be put to death for having thus deceived them. Josue and the elders

answered: "We have sworn to them in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, and therefore we may not touch them. Let their lives be saved, lest the wrath of the Lord be stirred up against us, if we should be forsworn; but so let them live as to serve the whole multitude in hewing wood and bringing in water." The lives of the Gabaonites were thus spared, but their possessions were taken from them; and from that day forward they were reduced to the condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water in the service of the Altar of the Lord, and of all the people.

The Gabaonites reduced to the condition of servants.

When it became known that the Gabaonites had made an alliance with Josue, the kings of Southern Palestine were filled with rage at their defection; and, in order that they might strike terror into all who should be tempted to follow their example, resolved to inflict such punishment on them as would serve as a terrible warning. With this intention, five powerful kings combined their forces, and under the leadership of Adonisedec, king of Jerusalem, proceeded to lay siege to Gabaon.

The confederacy of the five kings.

The Gabaonites sent an urgent message to Josue at Galgal, asking him for assistance, and entreating him to come with all speed and save them from destruction. Josue waited not, but immediately prepared to advance. Marching from Galgal by night, he came suddenly upon the combined forces as they lay encamped before the city, and defeated them with great slaughter. Those who escaped from the battle sought safety in flight; but, as we read in the Sacred Text, "when they were fleeing from the children of Israel, and were in the descent of *Bethoron*, the Lord cast down upon them great stones from heaven, as far as Azeca: and many more were killed with the hailstones than were slain by the swords of the children of Israel" (Jos. x. 11).

Josue defeats them.

Then it was that Josue, fearing that night would put an end to the battle before the victory was complete, showed how great was his faith in prayer, and his unbounded confidence in God. Turning towards the sun, he addressed to it this wonderful command: "Move not, O sun, towards Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, towards the valley of Ajalon." God listened to his prayer, and the sun and the moon stood still, thus enabling Josue to continue the pursuit, and to complete the destruction of the enemy. "So the sun . . . hasted not to go down the space of one day. There was not before, nor after, so long a day, the Lord obeying the voice of a man, and fighting for Israel" (Jos. x. 13, 14).

The sun stands still.

The five kings, having left their people to escape as best they could, took refuge in a cave at Maceda; but when their hiding-place had been discovered, and the fact made known to Josue, he gave orders for large stones to be rolled against the mouth of the cave, and for men to be set to keep a careful guard. Meantime the pursuit was kept up, and not till the fugitives were utterly routed did Josue give orders for the kings to be brought forth. They were immediately dragged out, and as they lay prostrate upon the ground Josue commanded his captains to set their feet on the necks of the kings. Then he slew them, and hanged them on gibbets until evening. At sunset they were taken down, and thrown into the cave where they had lain hidden, and huge stones were placed at the entrance.

The capture of the five kings.

The memorable battle of Bethoron was followed by the conquest of seven important kings in quick succession—the kings of *Maceda*, *Lebna*, *Lachis*, *Gazer*, *Eglon*, *Hebron*, and *Dabir*. By these victories Josue made himself master of the southern half of Palestine, both of the hills and of the

Josue master of Southern Palestine.

plain, from Cadesbarne to Gaza, after which he returned with all Israel to the camp at Galgal.

Confederacy under Jabin.

When Jabin, king of Asor, heard of the mighty deeds of Josue, he resolved to make one last great effort to stem the progress of the victorious Israelites. Placing himself at the head of the conquered nations, and gathering round his standard the kings of the north, he assembled all his forces by the waters of Merom. "They all came out with their troops, a people exceeding numerous as the sand that is on the sea-shore, their horses also and chariots, a very great multitude" (Jos. xi. 4). The Lord said to Josue: "Fear them not: for to-morrow, at this same hour, I will deliver all these to be slain in the sight of Israel: thou shalt hamstring their horses, and thou shalt burn their chariots with fire." By a forced march Josue reached the waters of Merom, and, on a sudden, fell upon the enemy. So irresistible was the onslaught that the rout soon became general. The Israelites pursued them and cut them down as they fled; their chariots they burnt; their horses they rendered powerless; Asor itself they set on fire, and put all the inhabitants to the sword.

But the work of Josue was not yet finished. For seven years more he was occupied in overcoming those numerous kings who still held out in their fortified cities; and before the Israelites could rest from war, thirty-one kings are mentioned as having been overthrown by him.

CHAPTER XL

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND—DEATH OF JOSUE, B.C. 1434

Josue commanded to divide the land.

When Josue was far advanced in years, the Lord said to him: "Thou art grown old, and there is a very large country left which is not yet divided by lot. Divide the land in possession to the *nine tribes*, and to the *half tribe* of Manasses." The other half of the same tribe, as we have seen, and the tribes of Ruben and Gad, had already been assigned their portions by Moses on the east side of the Jordan.

Caleb's request.

In his task of apportioning the land of Chanaan, Josue was assisted by Eleazar, the High Priest, and by the princes of the various tribes; but before entering upon their work, there came to them Caleb, the son of Jephone, who, turning to Josue, said: "Thou knowest what the Lord spoke to Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Cadesbarne. I was forty years old when Moses sent me to view the land, and I brought him word again as seemed true to me, but my brethren, that had gone up with me, discouraged the heart of the people. And Moses swore in that day, saying: 'The land which thy foot hath trodden upon shall be thy possession, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast followed the Lord thy God.' The Lord therefore hath granted me life, as He promised, until this present day. It is forty and five years since He spoke this word to Moses, when Israel journeyed through the wilderness, and this day I am eighty-five years old, as strong as I was at that time when I was sent to view the land. Give me, therefore, this mountain, wherein are the Enacims, and cities great and strong, and if the Lord be with me I shall be able to destroy them as He promised me." Pleased

with his request, Josue blessed him, and gave him Hebron in possession.

Hebron conquered by Caleb.

Caleb made no delay in attacking Hebron, and destroyed the giant sons of Enac. Going up from Hebron, he came to the inhabitants of Dabir, which before was called Cariath-Sepher, that is to say, *the city of letters*. As they approached the city, Caleb said: "He that shall smite Cariath-Sepher, and take it, I will give him Axa, my daughter, to wife." Thereupon Othoniel, the son of Cenez, the younger brother of Caleb, attacked the city and took it. As a reward for his valour he received the hand of Axa in marriage, according to the promise of Caleb, and with her, by way of dowry, large possessions.

The Tabernacle removed from Galgal to Silo.

Meanwhile the Israelites had removed to *Silo*, with the Tabernacle of the Testimony, after having had their camp in Galgal for fully seven years; and it is supposed that the Tabernacle continued at Silo for upwards of three centuries, till the days of Samuel. It was there, before the Tabernacle, that Josue cast lots for the land, and distributed it among the remaining nine and a half tribes as follows:

1. The *south* fell to *Simeon*, *Juda*, *Benjamin*, and *Dan*.
2. The *centre* to *Ephraim* and the half tribe of *Manasses*.
3. The *north* to *Issachar*, *Zabulon*, *Aser*, and *Nephtali*.

Josue waited till all had been provided for before selecting a portion for himself, when he asked for, and obtained as a possession, *Thamnath Saraa*, on Mount Ephraim, and here he built a city of the same name.

The two and a half tribes.

Now that peace was at length secured, Josue summoned the tribes of Ruben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasses, and said to them: "You have done all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you: you have also obeyed me in all things, neither have you left your brethren this long time.

until this present day. Therefore, as the Lord your God hath given your brethren rest and peace, as He promised return and go to your dwellings, and to the land of your possession, which Moses gave you, beyond the Jordan yet so that you love the Lord your God, and walk in all His ways, and keep all His commandments, and cleave to Him, and serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul." Then Josue blessed them, and sent them away and they returned to their dwellings.

The altar beside the Jordan.

When they arrived at the Jordan, they determined, before crossing the river, to erect an immense altar as a monument to posterity that they were one in religion, and had the same interests in common with their brethren of the other tribes. But when those assembled at Silo heard what had been done thinking their brethren guilty of idolatry, they were filled with zeal for God's honour, and resolved to punish without delay the supposed apostasy of the two and a half tribes. They demanded to be led against them at once. In the meantime, however, Josue and Eleazar sent an embassy composed of ten princes—one from each tribe—to ask them to state openly for what reason they had built the altar, and to declare war against them if they could not succeed in bringing them to a sense of duty.

The answer to Josue's embassy.

Phinees and those who were with him laid their complaints before them, saying: "What meaneth this transgression? Why have you forsaken the Lord, the God of Israel, building a sacrilegious altar, and revolting from the worship of Him? Is it a small thing to you that you sinned with Beelphegor and the stain of that crime remaineth in us to this day, and many of the people perished? And you have forsaken the Lord to-day, and to-morrow His wrath will rage against all Israel." Startled at such an accusation, the others made answer: "The Lord the most mighty God knoweth

and Israel also shall understand. If with the design of transgression we have set up this altar, let Him not save us, but punish us immediately. And if we did it that we might lay upon it holocausts, and sacrifice, and peace-offerings, let Him judge. But we said: 'Let us build an altar, not for holocausts, nor to offer victims, but for a *testimony* between us and you, and our posterity and yours, that we may serve the Lord.' God keep us from any such wickedness that we should revolt from the Lord, and leave off following His steps, by building an altar to offer holocausts, and sacrifices, and victims, beside the altar of the Lord our God which is erected before His Tabernacle."

The altar of testimony.

On hearing these words, Phinees was filled with joy, and said: "Now we know that the Lord is with us, because you are not guilty of this revolt." He then returned with the princes into the land of Chanaan to the children of Israel, and brought them the pleasing tidings. All rejoiced and praised God; and the children of Ruben and of Gad called the altar which they had built *Our Testimony* that the Lord is God.

The unconquered districts.

In the course of the conquest of Chanaan not all the inhabitants were destroyed, but a great part of the country remained in the possession of its original owners. God, who chose to leave some of the ancient inhabitants in the country to try the fidelity of His people, and to punish them should they fail in their duty to Him, had commanded Josue to proceed with the distribution, that the different tribes might take care to exterminate those idolaters who might be found in their territory.

Josue lived but ten years after the division of the land. Shortly before his death, fearing lest the Israelites should by degrees begin to imitate the corrupt manners of the

people of the country, he assembled all the tribes of Israel in Sichem, and called for the ancients and the princes. For the last time he exhorted them to be courageous, and carefully to observe all things that were written in the Book of the Law of Moses. "Turn not aside from them," said he, "either to the right or to the left, lest after you are come in among the Gentiles, who will remain among you, you should swear by the name of their gods, and serve them, and adore them; but cleave unto the Lord your God, as you have done until this day. This only take care of with all diligence, that you love the Lord your God. But if you will embrace the errors of these nations that dwell among you, and make marriages with them, and join friendships, know ye for a certainty that the Lord will not destroy them before your face, but they shall be a pit and a snare in your way, and a stumbling-block at your side, till He take you away and destroy you from off this excellent land which He hath given you. Behold this day I am going into the way of all the earth."

Josue's exhortation.

After briefly reviewing their past history, and reminding them of all that God had done for them, he bade them choose whether they would serve the Lord or the false gods of the Amorrhites. The people answered in a loud voice: "God forbid we should leave the Lord and serve strange gods. We will serve the Lord for He is our God." Then Josue said to the people: "You are witnesses that you yourselves have chosen the Lord to serve Him." They answered: "We are witnesses: we will serve the Lord, and we will be obedient to His commandments." The words of the Covenant, then solemnly renewed in Sichem, Josue wrote in the *Volume of the Law of the Lord;* and taking a great stone and setting it up, he said to all the people: "Behold this stone shall be a testimony unto you, that it hath hea

The people promise fidelity to God.

all the words of the Lord which He hath spoken to you, lest perhaps hereafter you will deny it, and lie to the Lord your God."

Death of Josue, B.C. 1434, at the age of 110.

This was the last public act of the great servant of God; for after he had sent away every one to his own home, he died peacefully at the age of 110, and was buried by his faithful people in the border of his own possession. Throughout his long life we have seen him remarkable for his courage, and indeed for every noble virtue; yet his greatest honour is to have been a striking figure of Jesus, whose name he bore. Like Him he introduced the people into the Promised Land, overthrew their enemies, and established them in peace. We are told that Israel served the Lord all the days of Josue, and of the ancients who lived a long time after him, and that had known all the works which the Lord had done in Israel.

Death of Eleazar.

Shortly after the death of Josue, Eleazar the High Priest, the son of Aaron, also died, and was succeeded in the sacred office by his son Phinees, a man full of the greatest zeal and piety.

Respecting the account of the death of Josue, the same remarks might be made as in the case of Moses. If he wrote the Book which bears his name, as is commonly believed, the last verses would probably be written by Samuel, or some other prophet.

Burial of Joseph.

The bones of Joseph, which the Hebrews had brought with them out of the land of Egypt, were at length laid to rest, as they were now buried in Sichem, in that part of the field which Jacob had bought of the sons of Hemor, the father of Sichem.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

This Book contains the history of what passed under the government of the judges, who ruled Israel before the kings, *i.e.*, from Josue to Samson. God generally chose these judges to be His ministers, and to deliver the people on their repentance from some dreadful calamity. They exercised a supreme power, yet without bearing the insignia of royal authority, or imposing taxes, or making any alteration in the established laws. They were guided by the declarations of the High Priest when he was arrayed with the *Urim* and *Thummim*, and their business was to promote the observance of the true religion and to defend the people of God. When God did not raise up judges in an extraordinary manner, each tribe regarded only its own affairs, making war or peace, and entering into treaties as an independent community. The author of this Book, according to the more general opinion, was the prophet Samuel, and the transactions described in it cover a period probably of 315 years, from the death of Josue, B.C. 1434, to the death of Samson, B.C. 1119.

CHAPTER XLI

KING ADONIBEZEC—IDOLATRY OF THE ISRAELITES

Juda to lead.

After the death of Josue, the children of Israel consulted the Lord and asked: "Who shall go up before us against the Chanaanite, and shall be the leader of the war?" The Lord, by the mouth of the High Priest Phinees, made answer: "*Juda* shall go up: behold I have delivered the land into his hands." The tribe of Juda, therefore, took the lead; and, in conjunction with the tribe of Simeon, attacked the Chanaanites and the Pherezites, and gained a great victory over them. The cruelty of *Adonibezec* (*Lord of Bezec*) roused the attention of the Israelites, and they resolved to treat him as he had been wont to treat others. This tyrant had been in the habit of behaving towards his captives in the most barbarous fashion. Seventy kings, who at different times had fallen into his hands, he first of all maimed by cutting off their

fingers and toes, and then amused himself by watching them feed, like dogs, on what he threw down to them from his rich table.

Capture of king Adonibezec.

Attacking Bezec, his capital, Juda and Simeon succeeded in capturing it. They put to death 10,000 of its inhabitants, but amid the general confusion Adonibezec escaped, and sought safety in flight. When this became known, a party was told off to pursue; and the king was soon overtaken, made prisoner, and brought to Jerusalem. After they had mutilated him as he had formerly mutilated the seventy kings, he acknowledged the justice of his punishment, saying: "As I have done, so hath God requited me." He died at Jerusalem, the *lower city* of which had been taken about this time.

God's precepts are neglected.

Many of the tribes proved unfaithful to the command of God bidding them exterminate their enemies, and instead of expelling the Chanaanites from their strongholds, they contented themselves with making them tributary to them, at the same time securing to them their lives and property. What had been foretold now began actually to take place. The Israelites entered into marriages with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land, imitated their perverse manners, protected their altars, and in the end yielded to the grossest abominations. For their negligence and wickedness an angel appeared to them, and in God's name thus rebuked them: "I made you go out of Egypt, and have brought you into the land for which I swore to your fathers. And I promised that I would not make void My Covenant with you for ever, on condition that you should not make a league with the inhabitants of this land, but should throw down their altars. You would not hear My voice; wherefore I would not destroy them from before your face, that you may have enemies, and their gods may be your ruin" On hearing

the reproaches of the angel, the people were overcome with sorrow, and wept for their transgressions. So great was their display of grief that, in memory of the event, the place was named *The Place of Weepers.*

God punishes His people for their infidelity.

Their repentance, however, was not lasting; for we read that they soon fell again into idolatry, and served Baal and Astaroth, pagan deities, having already forgotten the Lord, and the works which He had done for Israel. And because they followed strange gods, and the gods of the people that dwelt round about them, and adored them, they provoked the Lord to anger. This time God punished them by delivering many of them into the hands of plunderers, who took them, and sold them to their enemies. Having abandoned God, they fell an easy prey to their foes, and wheresoever they went, the hand of the Lord was upon them. By a false compassion for their enemies, whom God had commanded them to destroy, and by their negligence, the Israelites brought upon themselves the most serious difficulties. Those whom they had spared turned against them, by a just judgment of God, and proved the ruin both of their souls and bodies, by drawing them into idolatry and then putting them to the sword. Thus, too, did the gods of the Chanaanites bring destruction upon them, as the Lord had foretold.

The inconstancy of the Israelites.

After a time God was moved to mercy, and heard the groanings of the afflicted. He raised up judges who delivered them from their oppressors, and thereby rescued Israel from servitude. "But after the judge was dead, they returned, and did much worse things than their fathers had done, following strange gods, serving them, and adoring them. . . . And the wrath of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He said 'Behold this nation hath made void My Covenant, which I had made with their fathers, and hath despised to

hearken to My voice: I also will not destroy the nations which Josue left when he died, that through them I may try Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord . . . as their fathers kept it, or not'" (Judg. ii. 19-22).

CHAPTER XLII

THE STORY OF MICHAS—THE LEVITE'S WRONG

Michas of Mount Ephraim.

THERE dwelt in the district of Mount Ephraim a man named Michas, whose mother, having lost a sum of money and believing it to have been stolen, was uttering imprecations against the thief, when Michas, who had taken it, terrified by her words, came and informed her that he had it safe. She thereupon changed her curses into blessings. In cursing the thief she had vowed the silver to the Lord, to make a graven and a molten image; and now, when Michas restored the money to her, she took 200 pieces, and gave them to the silversmith for the purpose of fulfilling her vow. Michas set up the images in his house, and made vestments and all that was necessary for the priestly functions. This done, he consecrated one of his sons as priest. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every one did that which seemed right to himself" (Judg. xvii. 6).

isit of the oung Levite.

Soon after these events, it chanced that a young man, who was journeying through that district, came to Mount Ephraim, and turned aside into the house of Michas. Being asked whence he came, he answered: "I am a Levite of Bethlehem-Juda, and I am going to dwell where I can, and where I shall find a place to my advantage." Michas said to him: "Stay with me, and be unto me a priest, and I will give thee every year ten pieces of silver, and a double suit of apparel, and thy victuals." He consented to these terms, and became as a

son to Michas, who appointed him his priest, and rejoiced within himself, saying: "Now I know God will do me good, since I have a priest of the race of the Levites."

The tribe of Dan.

About this time the tribe of Dan sought an inheritance in which to dwell, for as yet they had entered upon but a small part of their possession among the other tribes. Five men, valiant and strong, were sent to spy out the land, and to view it diligently. In the course of their wanderings they came to Mount Ephraim, and having gone into the house of Michas, they rested there. Finding there the young Levite, who was no other than Jonathan, the grandson of Moses, and learning the position that he held in the family of Michas, they desired him to consult the Lord, that they might know whether their journey would be successful or not. His answer was favourable, and they went on their way.

The Sidonian town of Lais.

Continuing in a northerly direction, they at length came to the town of Lais, inhabited by Sidonians, who dwelt there in the greatest security, as they thought, and with no man to oppose them. These people were in possession of a land of surpassing fertility; they were rich, and lived separated by a day's journey from Sidon, so that the people of the latter city could not come to their assistance at a very short warning. After the spies had made a careful observation of the city, and had noted how far removed it was from all external help, they returned with all possible speed to inform their tribe. That no time might be lost in unnecessary delay, they stirred up the zeal of their brethren by thus spiritedly addressing them: "Arise, and let us go up to them: for we have seen the land, which is exceedingly rich and fruitful. Neglect not, lose no time; let us go and possess it, for we can do so without difficulty. The Lord will deliver the place to us, in which there is no want of anything that groweth on the earth."

There went, therefore, of the kindred of Dan 600 men, furnished with arms, and fully equipped for war. Their first encampment was at Cariathiarim of Juda, which from that time was called the *Camp of Dan*, and thence they passed to Mount Ephraim. Coming to the house of Michas, they were informed by the five spies of the presence there of the young Levite, and of all the circumstances of his dwelling in the family of Michas. While some engaged the Levite in conversation, others possessed themselves of the priestly vestments and the images, and brought them forth out of the house. When they emerged from the door, he perceived what they had done, and began to complain bitterly of their conduct, but was soon appeased by the Danites, and persuaded to follow them. "Hold thy peace," they said, "and put thy finger on thy mouth, and come with us, that we may have thee for a father and a priest. Whether is it better for thee to be a priest in the house of one man, or in a tribe and family in Israel?" When he heard this, he consented to go with them, abandoned his former protector, and taking with him the ephod and the images, departed in their company.

The Danites rob Michas of his priest and his gods.

They had not proceeded far when they heard the voice of Michas calling after them. Looking back, they asked: "What aileth thee? Why dost thou cry?" He loudly accused them of having taken away his images and his priest, and of robbing him of all that he possessed. The children of Dan answered him: "See thou say no more to us, lest men enraged come upon thee, and thou perish with all thy house." They then resumed their journey, while Michas, seeing that they were stronger than he, returned to his house.

The distress of Michas.

The Danites succeeded in surprising Lais, and having put all the inhabitants to the sword, they set the city on

fire. On this same spot they afterwards raised up a new city, which they named Dan, after their father, and here they set up the images of Michas. Jonathan and his sons were priests in the tribe of Dan down to the time of the Captivity; and the images stolen from Michas remained with them all the time that the house of God was in Silo.

The Danites capture Lais.

To what a pitch of disorder and wickedness the people had reached during this period may be gathered from the following incident.

A certain Levite, who dwelt on the side of Mount Ephraim, married a wife of Bethlehem-Juda. For some reason they disagreed, upon which she parted from her husband, and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem. The Levite waited in the hope that she would return to him; but after she had been absent four months he resolved to go in quest of her, and to try every persuasion to induce her to accompany him home. For this purpose he set out, taking with him one servant and two asses. She received him with every mark of affection; and her father also, when he heard of his son-in-law's arrival, welcomed him with joy. Three days were given up to feasting and making merry, and when, on the fourth day, the Levite began to make preparations for his departure, he was prevailed upon to remain yet another day. When the fifth day was already well advanced, his father-in-law again besought him to prolong his stay. "Consider that the day is declining," he urged, "and draweth towards evening: tarry with me to-day also, and spend the day in mirth, and to-morrow thou mayest go into thy house." The young man would not allow himself to be persuaded, but that same day, towards evening, set out with his wife and his servant, after having loaded the asses with all the necessaries for their journey.

The Levite of Mount Ephraim.

It was nightfall when they drew near to Jebus, and her

the servant would have had them pass the night; but his master refused, and said that they would not seek lodging before they came to Gabaa, a town belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. Arrived there, they entered the town, and after seeking in vain for a lodging, sat down to rest in the street. Here they were discovered by an old man who was returning from his work in the fields, and who, like the Levite, was himself from Mount Ephraim, but was at that time living in Gabaa. The old man questioned them; and learning that the Levite was his fellow-countryman, and that no one would give him a lodging, he said: "Peace be with thee; I will furnish all things that are necessary; only, I beseech thee, stay not in the street." He then brought them into his house, and having given provender to the asses, entertained the strangers with as much hospitality as his humble means would permit of.

utal death the Levite's fe.

While they were yet seated at their meal, and refreshing themselves after the labour of the journey, the house was beset by a band of lawless men, who, as in the days of Lot, demanded that the stranger should be brought out and delivered up to them. The old man, alarmed for the safety of his guests, went out and said: "Do not so, my brethren, do not so wickedly: this man is come into my lodging; I pray you, therefore, cease from this folly." Far from being quieted by these words, they next proceeded to threats, and would have forced an entrance, had not the Levite at this moment appeared on the threshold, accompanied by his wife. These wicked wretches at once seized the woman; and with such violence did they treat her, and so shamefully did they abuse her, that in the morning, when the door was opened, she was discovered, with her arms stretched out, lying across the threshold dead. At first her husband thought she was but sleeping, and endeavoured

to rouse her. "Arise," he said, "and let us be going." But as she made no answer he grew alarmed, and raising her in his arms, found to his horror that she was lifeless. Filled with grief and bitterness by reason of her cruel wrongs, he took her up, and having placed her upon his ass, returned home. Burning with feelings of resentment, he had no sooner arrived at his journey's end than, with his sword, he divided the dead body into twelve pieces, which he sent to the twelve tribes of Israel with an account of the atrocious crime, and demanding vengeance for the crying injury that had been done him. When the people heard of the horrible deed, and saw the ghastly tokens, they exclaimed: "There never was such a thing done in Israel, from the day that our fathers came up out of Egypt until this day: give sentence, and decree in common what ought to be done."

Preparations for revenge.

Maspha was chosen as the spot where all were to assemble, and here there met together 400,000 fighting men, all fired with the like feeling and determination, not to rest till the disgrace had been utterly wiped out by the punishment of the guilty ones. The Levite was called before the assembly, and asked to recount his wrong in the hearing of all the people; and when his story was ended, there burst from that mighty throng words of solemn resolve not to return to their tents, nor to go into their homes, till vengeance full and complete had been wreaked upon Gabaa. But before proceeding to open hostilities, they determined first of all to send messengers to all the tribe of Benjamin, whom they commissioned to say: "Why hath so great an abomination been found among you? Deliver up the men of Gabaa that have committed this heinous crime, that they may die, and the evil may be taken away out of Israel." Rather than comply with this most just demand, the Benjamites gathered together their forces to

the number of 25,000, and marching to the assistance of Gabaa, resolved to protect the wicked city, and to fight against the whole people of Israel. The fighting men of Gabaa numbered 700; and these, we are told, were most valiant men, able to fight as well with the left hand as with the right, and so skilled in the use of the sling *that they could hit even a hair.*

The Israelites, in their desire for revenge, neglected to ask God whether they ought to make war on their brethren; and, although they presented themselves before the Tabernacle at Silo, it was only to consult who was to be their leader in the coming contest with the children of Benjamin. Although the tribe of Juda was named, still did Almighty God chastise them for their presumption in relying on their own strength and numbers, and to teach them that in Him alone were they to put their trust. He had not promised them victory, and not till they had learned to humble themselves before Him did He bless their arms with success.

The Israelites are twice defeated by the Benjamites.

With the greatest confidence they marched out to battle as to certain victory. They advanced to Gabaa, and straightway began to assault the city, in the belief that every obstacle must speedily give way before them. But great was the humiliation that awaited them. The Benjamites sallied out of the town, and defeated them with such slaughter, that they were compelled to withdraw with a loss of two-and-twenty thousand men. Alarmed by this terrible disaster, but not yet despairing of success, and still self-confident, they drew their forces together for a second attack, after having again consulted God with tears in their eyes. They were told to renew the attack, and again they advanced, only to meet with another repulse scarcely less fatal than the first. This time they were driven back with a further loss of 18,000. Humbled and dejected,

they for the third time presented themselves before the Tabernacle. For a whole day they fasted and wept; and after they had offered holocausts and peace-offerings to the Lord, they besought Him to let them know whether or not they should go out any more to fight against the children of Benjamin, their brethren. In answer to their prayer, God spoke to them through the mouth of Phinees the High Priest: "Go up," He said, "for to-morrow I will deliver them into your hands." Their drooping spirits were cheered by this assurance, and yet a third time they marched against Gabaa.

Punishment of the Benjamites.

Elated by their previous successes, the Benjamites did not wait for them to come up to the town, but again boldly went forward to meet them. The Israelites designedly fled before them, hoping thus to draw them away to a distance. The stratagem succeeded admirably. With the utmost ardour the enemy pursued the retreating Israelites, never doubting but that an easy victory awaited them. To their surprise, however, the Israelites suddenly faced about, while at the same time there arose in their rear a shout of triumph from a body of men who had been lying in ambush, a shout that struck terror into the bravest. Panic-stricken when they found themselves thus hemmed in between two armies, the Benjamites turned this way and that, seeking some means of escape from their critical position; but whichever way they turned they were met by their fierce foe, who gave no quarter, but slew without mercy. There fell in that one day 25,100 of the Benjamites. The 600 who escaped saved themselves by flying into the wilderness to the rock of *Remmon*, where they remained four months. So utterly were the Israelites bent on their destruction, that they set fire to their cities and villages, after putting every living creature to the sword. The extermination of the Benjamites now seemed certain, as the Israelites had

already bound themselves by oath at Maspha not to give their daughters in marriage to any of those who might chance to make their escape.

ow the tribe
Benjamin
as saved from
ctinction.

Their feelings of resentment, however, soon gave way to pity, and repenting of the rashness of their proceedings, they now began to look round for some means whereby they might be able to prevent their extinction, and at the same time preserve their own oath inviolate. On inquiry it was found that the town of Jabes Galaad had taken no part in the late war. Now in the assembly at Maspha it had been solemnly vowed that all who neglected to join in punishing the Benjamites should themselves be slain for conniving, as it were, at the wickedness of Gabaa. Ten thousand men were accordingly sent to destroy all the inhabitants of Jabes Galaad except the unmarried women, 400 in number, who were to be reserved and given in marriage to the surviving Benjamites; and at the same time messengers were despatched to those at the rock of Remmon to invite them to come in peace and receive the wives provided for them. To help the remaining 200 to procure wives without causing the Israelites in any way to break the oath by which they had so solemnly bound themselves, this counsel was given them: "Behold there is a yearly solemnity to the Lord in Silo, which is situate on the north of the city of Bethel: go, and lie hid in the vineyards, and when you shall see the daughters of Silo come out, as the custom is, to dance, come ye on a sudden out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife among them, and go into the land of Benjamin. When their fathers and their brethren shall come, and shall begin to complain against you, and to chide, we will say to them: 'Have pity on them: for they took them not away as by the right of war or conquest; but when they asked to have

them, you gave them not, and the fault was committed on your part.'"

The advice was acted upon with success; and the Benjamites, returning into their possession, built up their cities and dwelt in them. The scruples of those fathers who had thus been deprived of their daughters were overcome by the assurance that they would not have to answer for any infraction of their oath, since they had not *given* their daughters, but had been forcibly deprived of them.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE JUDGES—OTHONIEL, AOD, SAMGAR, DEBBORA AND BARAC

The corruption of the Israelites.

In course of time the people of Israel had become so corrupted in their ways through their intercourse with the surrounding nations, marrying with them and giving in marriage, in direct violation of God's command, and contrary to the earnest advice of Josue, that their crimes began to cry aloud to Heaven for punishment.

They are oppressed by the king of Mesopotamia.

To recall them to a sense of duty, and to chastise them for their crimes, God made use in the first instance of Chusan Rasathaim, king of Mesopotamia, who, advancing farther and farther south, began gradually to encroach upon the Israelites, and for eight years so bitterly oppressed them by his cruelty and exactions, that in their distress they turned to God for assistance, acknowledged the justice of their punishment, and prayed for mercy and deliverance.

God was moved to pity, and in answer to their prayer raised up a deliverer in the person of Othoniel, the son of Cenez, the younger brother of Caleb. "The Spirit

of the Lord was in him, and he judged Israel." Getting together an army, Othoniel went out against Chusan, and succeeded in gaining a complete victory over him, thus securing peace and freedom from his oppressions.

thoniel, the
t Judge,
c. 1405.

After this, the Israelites enjoyed an unbroken rest for forty years, but after the death of Othoniel they again fell away into idolatry. Their relapse quickly brought down upon them the severest chastisements of God, who, to bring them to a sense of duty, this time made use of Eglon, king of Moab. This king, joining his forces with those of the Ammonites and the Amalecites, crossed the Jordan, overcame the Israelites, and took possession of the *City of Palm-Trees*. For eighteen years were the Israelites compelled to pay tribute to Eglon. At length, recognising their punishment as another judgment of God for their many infidelities, they began again to repent, and to call upon the Lord, who gave them a deliverer named Aod, the son of Gera, of the tribe of Benjamin. Aod, we are told, used the left hand as well as the right, and this special skill he turned to good account against the tyrant. Being chosen to present the usual tribute to Eglon, Aod made for himself a two-edged dagger, which he concealed under his garment on his right side. When he had made the accustomed offering to the king, he retraced his steps as far as Galgal, where he dismissed his attendants. He then returned and again presented himself before Eglon, telling him that he was the bearer of a secret message from God. The officers in attendance on the king were dismissed so that the interview might be conducted with the greatest privacy. On Aod's offering the supposed message, Eglon rose up from his throne to receive it; and whilst in the act of doing so, Aod, unperceived, quickly drew the dagger with his left hand, and before the king was aware of his intention, drove it

od, the
id Judge,
c. 1325.

with all his force into his body. Without stopping to draw out the weapon, Aod hurried out of the apartment, taking care to lock the doors, and escaped by a postern gate.

Aod's escape.

When the king's servants saw the doors shut, they believed that he did not wish to be disturbed, and waited a long time; but at length becoming suspicious that all was not well, they took a key, and on entering what was their consternation to find their lord lying dead on the floor! Meanwhile Aod had made good his escape; and before those in attendance on the king could recover from their surprise, he had already succeeded in reaching the *place of idols* at Galgal. He did not tarry there, but pushed on till he came to Seirath, which lay on the road from Galgal to Mount Ephraim. Arrived there, he sounded the trumpet-call, which was the recognised signal for the Israelites to rally round him. When they were come together, he addressed to them words of encouragement, and bade them follow him, for the Lord had delivered their enemies, the Moabites, into their hands. They then marched down to the Jordan, seized the fords, and thus cut off all retreat for those of the Moabites dwelling in the neighbourhood of Jericho at the *City of Palm-Trees*. At the same time they effectually prevented any assistance from being sent from the country of Moab, which lay on the east side of the Salt Sea. So complete was Aod's victory that none of the Moabites who dwelt to the west of the Jordan escaped. There fell on that day 10,000 of the enemy, all strong and valiant men, "and Moab was humbled under the hand of Israel: and the land rested eighty years."

Israel's next trouble arose from the incursions of the Philistines from the south-west; but these were temporarily

Samgar, the 3rd Judge.

checked by Samgar, the son of Anath, who armed with nothing but a ploughshare, slew 600 of them.

abin, king of
hanaan,
flicts Israel.

No longer checked by the influence of Aod, the children of Israel began again to return to their evil ways, forgetful alike of their God and of the bitter chastisements that had been inflicted upon them for their inconstancy. Their well-merited punishment came this time from another direction. Jabin, king of Chanaan, who reigned in Asor, in Northern Palestine, was the instrument chosen by God to afflict His people, that by suffering they might be brought back to the path from which they had strayed.

ebbora and
arac conjointly
s 4th Judge,
c. 1285.

Jabin's army was commanded by Sisara, a mighty general, who for twenty years grievously oppressed Israel, and who had at his command a vast number of fighting men, and 900 chariots armed with scythes. His presence struck terror into the Israelites. At that time Debbora, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel. Sitting under a palm-tree between Rama and Bethel, in Mount Ephraim, she was there consulted by the people, who were guided by her counsel and followed her decisions. She sent for Barac, the son of Abinoem, of the tribe of Nephtali, and when, in answer to her summons, he presented himself before her, she said to him: "The Lord God of Israel hath commanded thee: 'Go, and lead an army to Mount Thabor, and thou shalt take with thee 10,000 fighting men of the children of Nephtali, and of the children of Zabulon; and I will bring unto thee in the place of the torrent Cison, Sisara, the general of Jabin's army, and his chariots, and all his multitude, and will deliver them into thy hand.'" Barac expressed his unwillingness to go unless she would accompany him, and point out the time when he must attack the enemy. Debbora said to him: "I will go, indeed, with thee, but this time the victory shall not be attributed to thee, because Sisara shall be delivered

into the hands of a woman." She therefore arose, and went with Barac to Cedes.

Sisara, Jabin's general, defeated.

When word was brought to Sisara that Barac was gone up to Mount Thabor, he gathered together his 900 chariots and all his army, and placing them in battle array, prepared for the attack. The critical moment had now arrived for Debbora to give the signal for battle. "Arise," she cried to Barac, "for this is the day wherein the Lord hath delivered Sisara into thy hands: behold, He is thy leader." Without waiting to be attacked, the Israelites at once began to descend the mountain-side; and inspirited by the presence of Debbora, fell with great fury upon the ranks of the enemy. Even the elements seemed to come to the assistance of the Israelites, and to strike terror into Sisara's forces; for most dreadful storms of thunder and lightning arose, while the wind drove rain and hail into the face of the Chanaanites, and so confused their aim that their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them. At the same time the sword of Barac so dealt death around, that the enemy gave way, and Sisara himself was so terror-stricken, that he leapt from his chariot and fled on foot.

Sisara killed by Jahel.

Barac pursued the fleeing foe as far as Haroseth, and inflicted on them great slaughter. In his flight Sisara came to the tent of Haber, the Cinite. Now there was peace between Jabin and the house of Haber, and on the invitation of Jahel, the wife of Haber, Sisara entered the tent, thinking himself secure from danger. Breathless and fatigued, he threw himself down upon the floor of the tent, and there lay covered with a cloak which Jahel threw over him. Addressing Jahel he said: "Give me, I beseech thee, a little water, for I am very thirsty." She opened a bottle of milk, and when she had given him to drink, he said to

her: "Stand before the door of the tent, and when any shall come and inquire of thee, saying: 'Is there any man here?' thou shalt say: 'There is none?'" He presently fell asleep; and when Jahel saw that he slept, she took a long nail and a hammer, and softly and silently approaching Sisara, she put the nail upon his temples, and with the hammer drove it through his brain fast into the ground: "and so passing from deep sleep to death, he fainted away and died." Shortly afterwards, Barac, who was still in pursuit of Sisara, was seen coming up, whereupon Jahel advanced to meet him and said: "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." He followed her into the tent; and behold, stretched out in front of him, lay the dead body of Sisara, with the nail still fastened in his temples.

Thus was the power of Jabin broken. The Israelites, following up the victory, soon brought their late oppressors to ruin; for who could stand against them when God was with them? Israel after this enjoyed peace for forty years.

Canticle of Debbora and Barac.

To celebrate their victory over Sisara, Debbora and Barac sang this beautiful canticle of praise "O you of Israel, that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless the Lord. Hear, O ye kings, give ear, O ye princes: It is I, it is I, that will sing to the Lord, I will sing to the Lord, the God of Israel. . . The valiant men ceased and rested in Israel, until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel. . . My heart loveth the princes of Israel: O you, that of your own good will offered yourselves to danger, bless the Lord. . . Where the chariots were dashed together, and the army of the enemies was choked, there let the justices of the Lord be rehearsed, and His clemency towards the brave men of Israel: then the people of the Lord went down to the gates, and obtained the sovereignty. Arise,

arise, O Debbora; arise, arise, and utter a canticle Arise, Barac, and take hold of thy captives, O son of Abinoem. The remnants of the people are saved, the Lord hath fought among the valiant ones. . . The kings came and fought; the kings of Chanaan fought in Thanac, by the waters of Mageddo, and yet they took no spoils. There was war made against them from heaven: the stars, remaining in their order and courses, fought against Sisara. . . Blessed among women be Jahel, the wife of Haber, the Cinite, and blessed be she in her tent. . . She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer, and she struck Sisara, seeking in his head a place for the wound, and strongly piercing through his temples. . . His mother looked out at a window, and howled; and she spoke from the dining-room: 'Why is his chariot so long in coming back? Why are the feet of his horses so slow?' . . So let all Thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Thee shine, as the sun shineth in his rising."

CHAPTER XLIV

CALL OF GEDEON, THE FIFTH JUDGE, B.C. 1245

Israel oppressed by the Madianites.

THE Israelites, having again relapsed into idolatry, were abandoned by God and delivered over to the Madianites, who cruelly laid waste their country, and for a period of five years subjected them to the most painful hardships. The shortness of their servitude was, however, compensated for by its severity. To save their goods and persons from the depredations of the Madianites, they were even compelled to seek refuge in dens and caves, and to retreat into the mountain fastnesses. While the Madianites and the Amalecites overran their country, destroyed their

crops, and carried off their oxen, sheep, and asses, they themselves were left to perish of famine.

In their extremity, the Israelites humbled themselves; and in answer to their cries for mercy and pardon, God sent an angel to Gedeon, the son of Joas, of the tribe of Manasses, who, unknown to the Madianites, was at that time threshing wheat in his father's wine-press at Ephra. The angel appeared before Gedeon and said: "The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men." Gedeon answered: "I beseech thee, if the Lord be with us, why have these evils fallen upon us? Where are His miracles that our fathers have told us of, saying: 'The Lord brought us out of Egypt?' but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hand of Madian." The angel, speaking in the name of God, said to him: "Go, in this thy strength, and thou shalt deliver Israel out of the hand of Madian: know that I have sent thee." Gedeon, although endued with new strength by the angel, was yet so conscious of his own inability to effect the deliverance of the people, that he required the most convincing miracles to induce him to act as the judge of Israel. He therefore said to the angel: "I beseech thee, my lord, wherewith shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the meanest in Manasses, and I am the least in my father's house. If I have found grace before thee, give me a sign that it is thou that speakest to me: and depart not hence till I return to thee."

The call of Gedeon, the 5th Judge, A.C. 1245.

Upon this, Gedeon took a kid, and having killed it, he hurried within and boiled it; and when he had made unleavened loaves of a measure of flour, he put the flesh into a basket, and the broth of the flesh into a pot. These he carried to the oak where the angel was sitting, and presented them to him. But when, in obedience to the angel's command,

A sign given by the angel to Gedeon.

Gedeon had laid the flesh and the unleavened loaves upon a rock which stood close by, and had poured the broth over them, the angel put forth the tip of the rod which he held in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened loaves, and immediately there arose from the rock a fire which consumed them. At once the stranger vanished from sight; and Gedeon, when he realised that he had been conversing with God's heavenly messenger, exclaimed: "Alas, my Lord God: for I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." Then Gedeon built an altar to the Lord and called it *The Lord's Peace*.

Gedeon destroys the altar of Baal.

That same night the Lord again spoke to him and said: "Take a bullock of thy father's, and another bullock of seven years, and thou shalt destroy the altar of Baal, which is thy father's, and cut down the grove that is about the altar. And thou shalt build an altar to the Lord thy God, on the top of this rock, whereupon thou didst lay the sacrifice before, and thou shalt take the second bullock, and shalt offer a holocaust upon a pile of the wood, which thou shalt cut down out of the grove." Gedeon, fearing lest his relations and fellow-citizens, who themselves were given up to idolatry, should oppose and prevent him if he attempted to execute God's commands during the day, secretly left the house by night, and with ten chosen servants succeeded in carrying out the work entrusted to him.

The people are enraged against Gedeon.

Next morning the people of the town were filled with astonishment to find the altar of Baal destroyed, and the grove cut down. They began eagerly to inquire of each other who was the guilty author of the outrage; and when at length their suspicions fell upon Gedeon, and these suspicions had been confirmed, probably by some of Gedeon's servants, they proceeded directly to the house of Joas his father, and threateningly demanded that Gedeon should be

brought forth to die for having impiously overturned the altar of Baal, and for having hewn down his sacred groves. Joas answered them; "Are you the avengers of Baal, that you fight for him? If he be a god, let him revenge himself on him that hath cast down his altar." These arguments seem to have had weight with the men of the city, for they withdrew without offering further violence. From that day Gedeon was called Jerobaal (*let Baal plead*), because Joas had said: "Let Baal revenge himself on him that hath cast down his altar."

The first miracle of the fleece.

Shortly after this daring act of Gedeon, and probably in consequence of it, the Madianites and Amalecites, and the people dwelling to the east of the Jordan, gathered together, and passing over the river encamped in the valley of Jezrael. But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gedeon, who sounded the trumpet, and called upon the house of Abiezer to follow him. He next sent messengers to all the people of Manasses; and they too followed him. Other messengers were despatched to the tribes of Aser, Zabulon and Nephtali, and they also came to meet him. Then, with the intention doubtlessly of raising the spirits of his followers, he thus besought the Lord to confirm his mission by a further sign: "If Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as Thou hast said, I will put this fleece of wool on the floor: if there be dew on the fleece only, and it be dry on all the ground beside, I shall know that by my hand, as Thou hast said, Thou wilt deliver Israel." His faith in God's power to grant his request met with its reward; for the very next morning Gedeon, rising early, went to the spot where he had spread out the fleece. The earth around he found dry as before, but the fleece was so saturated with dew that, on wringing it out, he was able to fill a vessel with the water thus obtained.

The second miracle of the fleece.

That no shadow of doubt might remain in the minds of his soldiers, he prayed to God for yet another sign, and this the reverse of the first. "Let not Thy wrath," he said, "be kindled against me, if I try once more, seeking a sign in the fleece. I pray that the fleece only may be dry, and all the ground wet with dew." God was pleased on this occasion also to grant his prayer. Going out in the early morning to examine the fleece, he found it dry, while all the ground was covered with dew.

In these two miracles the Fathers observe that the fleece represented the Jewish nation, favoured with so many graces, while the rest of the world was dry and barren; and that, when the latter was watered with dew from heaven, by the coming of Jesus Christ, the Synagogue was deprived of those favours.

CHAPTER XLV

GEDEON'S VICTORY

God's choice of 300 men.

After God had thus miraculously confirmed His promises, Gedeon led his followers to the fountain called Harad (*of trouble*), not far from which the enemy lay encamped. Here the Lord again appeared to him and said: "The people that are with thee are many, and Madian shall not be delivered into their hands, lest Israel should glory against Me, and say: 'I was delivered by my own strength.' Speak to the people, and proclaim in the hearing of all: 'Whosoever is fearful and timorous, let him return.'" This Gedeon did, and immediately 22,000 of his men returned home, leaving only 10,000. Even this number was too great for the Divine purpose; and Gedeon was commanded to lead the 10,000 down to the waters, where God

would show him in a remarkable manner the chosen few who alone were to advance against the mighty host of the Madianites. Before coming to the waters, Gedeon had been commanded to observe very closely the manner in which the Israelites quenched their thirst. Now, of the 10,000 Israelites, all, with the exception of 300, fell down on their knees and eagerly applied their lips to the water, while the remaining few merely stooped down, and taking the water up in the hollow of their hands, raised it to their lips. Then God said to Gedeon: "By the 300 men who lifted the water in their hands I will save you, and deliver Madian into thy hand: but let all the rest of the people return to their place."

Gedeon in the enemy's camp.

It was evening; and Gedeon with his small band remained concealed on the hillside, above the plain on which were encamped the Madianites and the Amalecites in such numbers that we are told they were *as a multitude of locusts*, and that their camels also were innumerable *as the sand that lieth on the seashore*. That night the Lord bade Gedeon go down into the enemy's camp, taking as his only attendant Phara his servant, in order to learn their plans and observe the disposition of their forces. Gedeon lost no time in carrying out the Divine command. As he crept in the most cautious manner from tent to tent, his attention was drawn to one in particular, in which he overheard one of the Madianites relating to a companion a dream which he had had the previous night. "I dreamt," said he, "a dream, and it seemed to me as if a hearth-cake of barley-bread rolled and came down into the camp of Madian; and when it was come to a tent, it struck it, and beat it down flat to the ground." His comrade remarked: "This is nothing else but the sword of Gedeon, the son of Joas, a man of Israel, for the Lord hath delivered Madian and all their camp into his hand." Hearing this, Gedeon

was filled with hope and courage, and returned, with as much haste as prudence would permit, to the place where he had left his companions in arms. The recital of what he had heard made them eager to advance to the attack with as little delay as possible.

Preparing for the attack.

When Gedeon had thus stirred up the courage of his followers, he proceeded to divide them into three companies. His manner of attack was as wonderful as the success with which it was attended was complete. To each soldier he gave a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lighted torch, and instructed every man to conceal his torch within the pitcher, and to observe the strictest silence until he received the signal agreed upon. "What you shall see me do," said he, "do you the same: I will go into one part of the camp, and do you as I shall do. When my trumpet shall sound, do you also blow the trumpets on every side of the camp, and shout together to the Lord and to Gedeon."

The attack.

It was at the beginning of the midnight watch when the 300 reached the posts they had been commanded to take up; and now the wished-for moment was come. Breaking the solemn stillness of the night was heard the loud blare of a trumpet; and before its echoes had died away there arose from three sides of the camp a sound that filled the enemy with consternation. No sooner had the men heard Gedeon's signal than, dashing their pitchers to the ground, they suddenly displayed their torches, and pealed forth a deafening blast with their trumpets, following it up with the cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gedeon."

The victory.

Half-stupefied, the Madianites rose to their feet, terrified by the sudden shouts, the flashing lights, and the sound of the trumpets. Believing themselves surrounded by a great army, they became so demoralised that they began to cut to pieces all whom they met, fail-

ing in their disorderly fright to recognise friend from foe. Thus great numbers were slain, while the rest fled, hotly pursued by Gedeon and his 300. Messengers were despatched in all haste to Nephtali, Aser, and Manásses, to ask them to join in the pursuit of the fleeing Madianites, while the Ephraimites hastily seized the fords of the Jordan and prevented most of the enemy from crossing the river. Among the captured were two chieftains, Oreb and Zeb. These were at once slain, and their heads carried to Gedeon, who had crossed the Jordan in pursuit of those who, notwithstanding all his precautions, had effected a passage.

The Ephraimites appeased.

Now that the victory was secure, the Ephraimites, who seem to have had some grounds for being displeased, came to Gedeon, and complained that they had not been summoned at first to take part in attacking the Madianites. "What is this," they asked, "that thou meanest to do, that thou wouldst not call us when thou wentest to fight against Madian?" Gedeon, seeing that they were indeed wrathful, answered them with great respect: "What could I have done like to that which you have done? Is not one bunch of grapes of Ephraim better than the vintages of Abiezer?" By these words Gedeon intimated that he had only commenced the war, but that the Ephraimites had brought it to a happy termination by killing the princes of the enemy, Oreb and Zeb. With this mild answer their angry spirits were appeased, and the chase of the fugitives was renewed.

The men of Soccoth and Phanuel refuse victuals.

Having followed up the enemy as far as Soccoth, Gedeon and his 300 were hungry and exhausted from the long-continued pursuit. He therefore addressed the men of Soccoth as follows: "Give, I beseech you, bread to the people that are with me, for they are faint, that we may pursue Zebee

and Salmana, the kings of Madian." This they refused to do, alleging as their excuse their fear that the Madianites would afterwards destroy them out of revenge. Gedeon was filled with indignation at their refusal, and threatened them with the severest punishments. "When the Lord shall have delivered Zebee and Salmana into my hands," said he, "I will thresh your flesh with the thorns and briars of the desert." He then passed on to Phanuel, where he made the same request, only to be met with a like refusal. Here, too, he vowed vengeance, and declared that he would destroy their tower, because, relying on its strength, they had dared to treat him with such insolence.

The pursuit continued.

Gedeon was not long in coming up with the enemy, whom he found encamped a little to the east of the Jordan, where, thinking themselves secure from further pursuit, they had settled down to rest after the fatigues of their flight. Their surprise, however, may be imagined, when, suspecting no danger from any quarter, they heard the battle-cry of Gedeon ring loud and clear through the camp. Struck with sudden fear, they turned this way and that, only to meet their destruction. Their rout was complete. Zebee and Salmana, after making the greatest efforts to escape, were captured and taken before Gedeon, who in triumph conducted them to Phanuel and Soccoth, and showed them to the men of these cities, saying: "Behold, Zebee and Salmana, concerning whom you upbraided me!" He then proceeded to take a signal revenge on the two faithless cities, slaying all the men, and demolishing the tower of Phanuel as he had threatened.

And now he commanded the two kings to be brought before him, and inquired of them what manner of men they were whom they had slain in Thabor, as some of Gedeon's brothers and relations had taken refuge there

Zebee and Salmana slain by Gedeon.

Thinking doubtless to flatter Gedeon, they answered: "They were like thee, and one of them as the son of a king." But Gedeon, far from being appeased by their words was filled with wrath, and said: "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother. As the Lord liveth, if you had saved them, I would not kill you." He then turned to Jether, his eldest son, and bade him take a sword and slay them. Now, Jether was but a boy, and was afraid to carry out the instructions of his father; whereupon Gedeon, at the request of the chieftains themselves, put them to death with his own hand, and took away their ornaments and those which adorned the necks of their camels.

Gedeon refuses to be made king.

After this famous victory the Israelites came to congratulate Gedeon; and, as a reward for his great services, offered to make him their king, and to make the dignity hereditary in his family. This honour Gedeon refused. "I will not rule over you," he said, "neither shall my son, *but the Lord shall rule over you.*" Having thus declined the kingly title, he made but one request—viz., that they would bring him the golden earrings and other ornaments they had taken from the Madianites. This they willingly consented to do; and when he had received them, together with many jewels, and purple raiment which had been the property of the captured kings, he made of them an ephod —a priestly garment—which he kept in his native city, Ephra. This monument of the victory, and of the dignity of Gedeon, became, after his death, an occasion of superstition to the people, who foolishly imagined that they might consult the Lord wherever an ephod was found. They even went so far as to make Gedeon's ephod an instrument of their idolatrous worship; and not only was it the means of

Gedeon's ephod.

bringing ruin on the people themselves, but on the very house and family of Gedeon also.

Gedeon's death.

After Gedeon had thus restored peace to his people, he retired to his own home, where he died at a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father in Ephra. Israel enjoyed tranquillity for forty years, but soon after Gedeon's death fell again into idolatry. To such a depth of wickedness did they sink, that they made a covenant with Baal that he should be their god; "and they remembered not the Lord their God, who delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies round about, neither did they show mercy to the house of Jerobaal Gedeon, according to all the good things he had done to Israel."

CHAPTER XLVI

GEDEON'S SONS, ABIMELECH AND JOATHAM

Abimelech aims at the monarchy.

GEDEON, who had had many wives, left a family of seventy sons. One of these, Abimelech, whose mother was a native of Sichem, went soon after his father's death to visit his mother's relations, and to seek their support in carrying out a wicked plan which he had formed in his mind for securing to himself the supreme power. "Whether is it better for you," he said, "that seventy men, all the sons of Jerobaal, should rule over you, or that one man alone should rule? At the same time consider that I am your bone and your flesh." His mother's brethren, far from being averse to the scheme, promised to use their influence with the men of Sichem, and to try to gain them over to his side. The Sichemites were easily induced to come to the assistance of their kinsman, and gave him money out of the temple of Baalberith,

with which "he hired to himself men that were needy, and vagabonds, and they followed him."

e murders his rethren and ecomes king.

With these desperate characters Abimelech returned to his father's house in Ephra, and before his brethren became aware of his intention he had them seized and beheaded. One, however, the youngest, named Joatham, who seems to have been suspicious of the conduct of his brother, managed to escape by hiding. Then did the men of Sichem gather together, and all the families of the city of Mello; and accompanying Abimelech to the oak that stood in Sichem, they there made him their king.

oatham's arable.

When tidings of what had been done were conveyed to Joatham, he left his place of concealment, and took up his stand on the side of Mount Garizim, whence his voice could be heard by the Sichemites in the valley below. He then addressed to them the following parable:

"The trees went to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive-tree: Reign thou over us. And it answered: Can I leave my fatness, which both gods and men make use of, to come to be promoted among the trees?

"And the trees said to the fig-tree: Come thou and reign over us. And it answered them: Can I leave my sweetness, and my delicious fruits, and go to be promoted among the other trees?

"And the trees said to the vine: Come thou and reign over us. And it answered them: Can I forsake my wine, that cheereth God and men, and be promoted among the other trees?

"And all the trees said to the bramble: Come thou and reign over us. And it answered them: If, indeed, you mean to make me king, come ye and rest under my shadow: but if you mean it not, let fire come out from the bramble, and devour the cedars of Libanus."

By this parable Joatham reproached the men of Sichem for having thus basely requited the labours of Gedeon. They had shown that they chose rather to be governed by one who would allow them to follow their own wicked ways than be ruled by such as God Himself had appointed over them, and whom He had endowed with grace and with all virtues, signified by the olive and the other fruit-trees. They preferred the bramble, *i.e.*, a man possessed of the worst dispositions and destined in the end to prove their destruction, although he himself was to be involved in the common ruin.

Meaning of the parable.

"If," continued Joatham, "you have dealt well and without fault with Jerobaal and his house, rejoice ye this day in Abimelech, and may he rejoice in you; but if unjustly, let fire come out from him and consume the inhabitants of Sichem, and the town of Mello; and let fire come out from the men of Sichem, and from the town of Mello, and devour Abimelech." When he had said this he fled, and went into Bera, where he dwelt for fear of his brother. Joatham's curse was prophetical, and the judgment he had pronounced was not long in being fulfilled.

Joatham's curse.

The rule of Abimelech had lasted but three years when the Lord sent a very evil spirit between him and the inhabitants of Sichem, the spirit of discord, which God permitted to arise to punish the sins both of the ruler and of his subjects, of the evil-doer and of those who had been the accomplices of his sin. At this time Abimelech resided at Ephra, having appointed Zebul governor of Sichem, from whom he received information of what was doing. The Sichemites at last began to open their eyes to the cruel disposition of Abimelech, and to reflect on Joatham's parable, which tended to stir up in them the resolve no longer to suffer

The Sichemites turn against Abimelech.

the tyrant to remain unpunished. They began to detest him as the murderer of his brethren, and to attribute the shedding of their blood not only to him, but to the princes of Sichem who had aided him.

Plot to assassinate Abimelech.

At a time when they believed that Abimelech would visit their city, they appointed men to lie in wait for him among the mountain passes, and to fall upon him unawares. These desperados robbed and plundered indiscriminately, until news of their doings reached Abimelech. It was now the time of the vintage, and the Sichemites gave way to all the mad sallies which fury heated by wine could suggest. All self-control seemed to abandon them, particularly when Gaal, the son of Obed, a powerful man of the neighbourhood, came to put himself at their head. At his coming the Sichemites were inspired with feelings of reckless daring. Going out into the fields, they laid waste the vineyards, and trod down the grapes. With song and with dance they went into the temple of their god, and in their banquets and cups cursed Abimelech. Addressing his excited followers, Gaal cried out: "Who is Abimelech, and what is Sichem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerobaal, and hath made Zebul, his servant, ruler over the men of Emor, the father of Sichem? Why, then, shall we serve him? Would to God that some man would put this people under my hand, that I might remove Abimelech out of the way!"

Abimelech advances against Sichem.

Zebul secretly sent messengers to Abimelech earnestly beseeching him to lose no time in bringing assistance if he wished to save Sichem. Upon this, Abimelech hastily collected an army, and, having reached Sichem by night, arranged his men in four divisions, and bade them lie in ambush till he should give the signal. Next morning he directed them to advance silently towards the city, at the very time when Gaal

stood in the entrance of the gate, with Zebul by his side, looking in the direction of the mountains. Gaal, turning to Zebul, said: "Behold, a multitude cometh down from the mountains." Zebul, who knew the real state of affairs, but was anxious that Gaal should be taken unawares, laughed at him, as if he were disturbed by groundless fears, and replied: "Thou seest the shadows of the mountains as if they were the heads of men, and this is thy mistake." Again Gaal said: "Behold, there cometh people down from the midst of the land, and one troop cometh by the way that looketh towards the oak." To which Zebul tauntingly made answer: "Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Is not this the people which thou didst despise? Go out, and fight against him."

Destruction of Sichem.

Gaal had now no choice left. He accordingly went forth to meet Abimelech, but was routed and put to flight; and up to the very gates of Sichem the ground was strewn with the bodies of the slain. He himself was chased into the city, but was driven out thence by Zebul who, to prevent his return, closed the gates against him and his companions. Many of those, however, who favoured Gaal still remained behind; and next day Abimelech, came up and assaulted the city. Before night came on, Sichem fell into his hands, and terrible was the vengeance which he wreaked upon it. The inhabitants he put to the sword, the walls of the city he levelled to the ground; and, to testify his lasting hatred of the place, and to make the ground on which the city had stood barren and fit for nothing, he caused it to be sown with salt. About a thousand persons, men and women together, had taken refuge in the temple of their god Berith, situated in the tower of Sichem. The tower itself was remarkable for its strength, and here they thought themselves secure; but Abimelech was not to be

outdone, nor did the supposed sanctity of the place where they had sought safety make any impression on the tyrant's mind. He took an axe in his hand, and bidding his men do as they should see him do, proceeded in the direction of Mount Selmon. When he arrived at the mountain, which was well wooded, he cut off the bough of a tree, and laying it on his shoulder retraced his steps. All his army followed his example; and the branches thus acquired were piled against the stronghold and set on fire, while those who were within were either burnt to death or suffocated.

Abimelech killed at Thebes.

Some little distance from Sichem was the town of Thebes, against which Abimelech next directed his vengeance; but here he was destined to meet his own doom. In the midst of Thebes was a high tower, to which the inhabitants had fled for safety; and having strongly barred the gates, they stood upon the battlements to defend themselves. Thus prepared they awaited the arrival of the foe. When Abimelech came up, he fought stoutly; and while in the very act of setting fire to the gates, behold a woman hurled from above a piece of a millstone which struck him on the head and broke his skull. Knowing that his end had come, and fearing lest it might be said of him that he had died by a woman's hand, he hastily called to his armour-bearer to dispatch him with his sword. His order was obeyed, and thus he died miserably.

Although Abimelech is commonly regarded as the sixth Judge, it is difficult to conceive how he can have merited the title, since we see in him but a usurper who was chosen neither by God, nor by the Israelites in general, but by the Sichemites alone.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE JUDGES THOLA, JAIR, AND JEPHTE

Thola and Jair, the 7th and 8th Judges.

After the death of Abimelech, Thola and Jair successively ruled Israel, Thola for twenty-three years, Jair for twenty-two. As there is no mention of any enemy from which they were called upon to deliver Israel, we may conclude that the rule of each was during a period of peace. Jair, we are told, had thirty sons, who were princes of as many cities, which, from his name, were called Havoth Jair—that is, the towns of Jair.

The people again fall into idolatry.

The people, who had been kept in due restraint during the government of Jair, burst forth like a torrent at his death, and gave themselves up to the worship of Baalim and Astaroth, and even went after the gods of Syria and Sidon, of Moab and of the children of Ammon, as well as those of the Philistines. They left the Lord and did not serve Him. Their repeated infidelities stirred up God's anger against them, and He delivered them into the hands of the Philistines and of the Ammonites, who grievously oppressed them for eighteen years. Not only were those who dwelt on the east side of the Jordan sore distressed, but the Ammonites, passing over the Jordan, laid waste the land of Juda, Benjamin, and Ephraim.

Their sufferings and repentance.

Recognising the finger of God in the terrible sufferings that had come upon them, the Israelites cried to the Lord: "We have sinned against Thee, because we have forsaken the Lord our God, and have served Baalim." The Lord answered them: "Did not the Egyptians, and the Amorrhites, and the children of Ammon, and the Philistines, the Sidonians also, and Amalec, and Chanaan, oppress you, and you cried to Me, and I delivered you out of their

hand? And yet you have forsaken Me, and have worshipped strange gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. Go, and call upon the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of distress." Even then they did not despair, but cried out the more: "We have sinned, do Thou unto us whatsoever pleaseth Thee, only deliver us this time." Hereupon, they cast aside all the idols of strange gods, and served the Lord their God, and He was touched with their miseries.

phte, the h Judge, c. 1187.

At this time the Ammonites had encamped in Galaad, while the Israelites had assembled together and pitched their tents in Maspha. The Israelites were at first concerned as to who should be their leader, but eventually fixed upon Jephte, a most valiant man and a warrior, and him they entreated to assume the command.

phte's early story.

Jephte was himself a native of Galaad, but on his father's death he had been cast off by his brethren, and thrust out, because, though he had the same father as they, he had been born of a strange mother. Feelings of resentment naturally filled the heart of Jephte as he fled from his father's house into the land of Tob, where he gathered around him needy men and robbers, who followed him as their prince. When the ancients of Galaad came to Jephte in the land of Tob, to tell him of their decision, and to beg of him to lead them against the Ammonites, he answered them: "Are not you the men that hated me, and cast me out of my father's house, and now you are come to me, constrained by necessity? If you be come to me sincerely, that I should fight for you against the children of Ammon, and the Lord shall deliver them into my hand, shall I be your prince?" They replied: "The Lord who heareth these things, He Himself is mediator and witness that we will do as we have promised." Jephte

thereupon accepted the dignity thus conferred upon him by general consent; and in his capacity of leader of the Israelites, sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites to say in his name: "What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to waste my land? I do not trespass against thee, but thou wrongest me by declaring an unjust war against me. The Lord be judge, and decide this day between Israel and the children of Ammon." But his representations were in vain.

Jephte's vow and victory.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephte, who, going around Galaad and Manasses, gathered an army together and prepared for battle. Before marching out to meet the enemy, he made this vow to the Lord: "Whosoever shall first come forth out of the doors of my house, and shall meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, the same will I offer a holocaust to the Lord." The battle was begun, and victory fell to Jephte. The Ammonites were routed with great slaughter; twenty of their cities fell into his hands; and at the *Place of the Vineyards* such havoc was wrought among them that for a long time their power was thoroughly broken.

Jephte's return.

News of his success soon spread far and wide. As he returned victorious to his house at Maspha, in Galaad, he found to his bitter sorrow that it had already preceded him there, for as he drew near to his home, there came forth to meet him, accompanied by her maids, his only daughter. With timbrel and with dance did they welcome him; but, oh! what a bitter pang wrung the father's heart when he called to mind his solemn vow. At sight of her he rent his garments, and in the bitterness of his grief exclaimed: "Alas! my daughter, thou hast deceived me, and thou thyself art deceived; for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I can do no other

thing." Trembling with emotion, he then told her of the vow he had made.

The fate of his daughter.

The maiden, on hearing her father's words, bowed her head in submission; and, far from trying to turn him from his purpose, made answer thus: "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth to the Lord, do unto me whatsoever thou hast promised, since the victory hath been granted to thee, and revenge of thine enemies. Grant me only this, which I desire: Let me go, that I may go about the mountains for two months, and may bewail my virginity with my companions." He acceded to her request; and when the allotted time was expired, she returned to her father, who *did to her as he had vowed.* The custom was henceforth kept of the daughters of Israel assembling together every year for four days to lament the daughter of Jephte.

The nature of Jephte's vow.

Some are of opinion that the idea of Jephte was to consecrate to God whatsoever should first meet him, according to the condition of the thing, *i.e.*, to offer it up as a holocaust, if it were such a thing as might be so offered by the law; or to devote it to God in some other way, if it were not such as the law allowed to be offered in sacrifice. And therefore they think that the daughter of Jephte was not slain by her father, but only consecrated to perpetual virginity. It was, however, the common opinion of the holy Fathers that she was really offered as a holocaust in consequence of her father's vow. "In this view it may be held that Jephte, in fulfilling his vow, acted under the dictate of an erroneous conscience, or that on this occasion he received from God, the Author and Lord of life and death, a dispensation from that portion of the Law which forbade the offering in sacrifice of human beings. But whatever explanation may be given of the conduct of the father, we

cannot sufficiently admire the dutiful behaviour and amiable simplicity of the daughter, who willingly submitted to her parent's will, and exhorted him to fulfil the vow which he had made to the Most High."* If she were doomed to a life of perpetual virginity, this, by a Hebrew woman, would be regarded as a sacrifice almost equal to that of death itself, since it took away from her the hope of offspring, and consequently the hope that from some child of hers the Saviour of the world might one day spring.

Though it is impossible to decide the question, it may be well to state that most modern commentators incline to the opinion that the sacrifice was spiritual—namely, that the daughter of Jephte was consecrated to a life of virginity—and they advance such arguments as the following in support of their view: (i.) The Old Testament condemns human sacrifice in the strongest terms, and characterises it as the height of wickedness and godlessness; and the fact that such practices among the heathens had to be put down makes the idea of a dispensation very improbable. (ii.) Even the sacrifice of Isaac was prevented by God after the obedience of Abraham had been tested. (iii.) If the act was carried out, it could not have been done without the most deliberate consideration and the knowledge of the whole people. The daughter of Jephte being given two months to bewail her virginity, there was time for consideration; and the priests would have to interfere—indeed, would have to carry out the sacrifice, if such were to be allowed. (iv.) The Sacred Scripture speaks no word of blame. (v.) The very words of Judges (xi. 39), "*And he did to her as he had vowed, and she knew no man*," would be meaningless if the girl had been put to death; since the latter words denote virginity, as we gather from the Gospel of St. Luke (i. 34) when he is referring to Our Lady.

* Reeve.

he phraimites iarrel with ephte.

After Jephte's victory we find the Ephraimites again actuated by the same feelings of jealousy as they had already displayed on the occasion of Gedeon's victory. Because, as they alleged, they had not been called upon to take part in the enterprise, they threatened to treat Jephte with open violence, and to burn his house over his head. Jephte, however, asserted that he had called them, and that they had refused to respond to his appeal. As this explanation did not pacify the Ephraimites, the men of Galaad rose at the command of Jephte and utterly defeated them; and then, to prevent any from escaping into their own territory, they seized and held the fords of the Jordan. When any man drew near and asked permission to cross the river, he was first of all asked: "Art thou an Ephraimite?" If he said, "I am not," he was told to pronounce the word "Shibboleth." Now the Ephraimites could not pronounce the *sh*, so that if they answered "Sibboleth" they betrayed themselves, and were straightway seized and killed. The loss of the Ephraimites on that occasion amounted to two and forty thousand. Jephte judged Israel six years, and was buried in his own city of Galaad.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE JUDGES ABESAN, AHIALON, AND ABDON—BIRTH OF SAMSON, B.C. 1155

besan, hialon, and bdon, the 10th, th, and 12th dges.

After Jephte, Abesan of Bethlehem in Zabulon was judge over Israel for seven years; Ahialon, also of the tribe of Zabulon, for ten years; and Abdon, of the tribe of Ephraim, for eight years. No war is mentioned as having occurred under their rule; but after the death of Abdon we find Israel falling away again, and for forty years oppressed by

the Philistines, whom Almighty God permitted to inflict all manner of suffering upon them for their wilfully turning their backs upon Him, and giving themselves up to idolatry.

Samson to be a Nazarite.

As before, God was moved to pity by their cry of repentance, and from the tribe of Dan raised up a deliverer in the person of Samson, of whom so many wonderful deeds are recorded. On the confines of Juda and Dan, on the hill of Zaraa, dwelt Manue, a Danite, whose wife had for many years remained childless; yet was she the one chosen by God to become the mother of him who was to rescue Israel from the Philistines. An angel of the Lord appeared to her and said: "Behold thou shalt bear a son: beware thou drink no wine, nor strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing, for the child shall be a Nazarite of God from his infancy until the day of his death." Now a Nazarite must abstain from wine and from everything that may make a man drunk, and he must not eat anything that cometh out of the vineyard. He must let his hair grow, and avoid defiling himself by going into the presence of the dead, whether it be his father or his mother, his brother or his sister.

Birth of Samson, the 13th Judge.

When Manue was informed of what had happened, he prayed to the Lord that the man of God who had appeared to his wife might come again and teach them what they ought to do concerning the child that was to be born. God heard his prayer; and one day, while the wife of Manue was sitting alone in the field, the angel again appeared to her. On recognising him, she rose at once and hastened to call her husband, who accompanied her to the spot without delay. Manue saluted the angel, and begged to be allowed to prepare a kid for his entertainment. The angel answered him: "I will not eat of thy bread; but if thou wilt offer a holocaust, offer it to the Lord." Not knowing that it was

an angel who thus conversed with him, Manue asked the stranger his name, so that, when his promise should be fulfilled, they might honour him. The angel replied: "Why askest thou my name, which is wonderful?" Then Manue took a kid of the flocks, and the libations, and putting them upon a rock, offered them to the Lord who doth wonderful things; and he and his wife looked on. When the flame from this altar went up towards heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended also in the flame, at sight of which Manue and his wife prostrated themselves on the ground. Now for the first time did Manue understand that he had been speaking with an angel; and filled with alarm he said to his wife: "We shall certainly die, because we have seen God." His wife answered: "If the Lord had a mind to kill us, He would not have received a holocaust and libations at our hands; neither would He have showed us all these things, nor have told us the things that are to come." In due time a son was born to them, and they called his name *Samson* (*His sun, or joy*). The child grew, and the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to be with him in *the camp of Dan*, between Saraa and Esthaol.

mson kills a n.

One day, when Samson was grown up to man's estate, he went down to Thamnatha, and there saw one of the daughters of the Philistines, for whom he conceived a great affection. Wishing to marry her, he made known his desire to his parents, and begged their consent to the marriage; but his father, who hated the Philistines for the calamities they had brought upon the Israelites, and who did not know that what Samson proposed was directed by God, at first opposed his son's entreaties. "Is there no woman," he asked, "among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou wilt take a wife of the Philistines, who are uncircumcised?" As Samson's purpose could not be

moved, his parents at length yielded to his request, and accompanied him to Thamnatha for the purpose of arranging the marriage. They had already come to the vineyards of the town, when Samson was set upon by a young lion, which sprang out, raging and roaring, to devour him. Though unarmed, he was not dismayed; for the Spirit of the Lord having come upon him, he seized the lion and tore it in pieces as he would have torn a kid. So little did he think of the occurrence that when he came up to his parents, who, being some distance away, had not witnessed what had taken place, he did not even mention it to them. Some days after, as he chanced to pass by the same spot, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, when behold he found a swarm of bees and a honeycomb in its mouth. Taking the honey, he ate of it, and offered some to his father and mother; but he did not tell them that he had taken it from the mouth of the lion.

Samson's riddle.

The marriage feast was held at Thamnatha, and lasted for seven days, during which time thirty young men of the Philistines were invited to take part in the rejoicings. While they were making merry together, Samson said to them: "I will propose to you a riddle, which if you declare unto me within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty shirts, and as many coats; but if you shall not be able to declare it, you shall give me thirty shirts and the same number of coats." The riddle was this: "Out of the eater there came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Samson slays thirty men of Ascalon.

For three days did the Philistine youths try to expound the riddle, but in vain. Despairing of success, and angry at the thought of failure, they came to Samson's wife, and said: "Soothe thy husband, and persuade him to tell thee what the riddle meaneth; but if thou wilt not do it, we will burn thee and

thy father's house. Have you called us to the wedding on purpose to strip us?" In alarm she tried every means in her power to discover the secret; but finding her husband obstinate in his refusal to explain the meaning to her, she wept and said: "Thou hatest me, and dost not love me, therefore thou wilt not expound to me the riddle which thou hast proposed to the sons of my people." But he answered: "I would not tell it to my father and mother, and how can I tell it to thee?" She would not desist, however, but continued her importunities, till on the evening of the seventh day, becoming more troublesome than hitherto, she succeeded in overcoming his resolution. At once she revealed the meaning to the young men, who came to Samson and said: "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" But he answered them: "If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you had not found out my riddle." The Spirit of the Lord again came upon him, and he went down to Ascalon and slew there thirty men, whose garments he took away and gave to the young men who had declared the riddle. Being exceedingly angry at his wife's conduct, he hastily rose up; and then, leaving her abruptly, went back to his father's house.

CHAPTER XLIX

SAMSON'S EXPLOITS—HIS DEATH

Samson's prolonged absence from his wife caused her father to believe that he had abandoned her, and she was accordingly given in marriage to one of the bridal companions of her husband. But after awhile, when the days of the wheat harvest were at hand, Samson returned to demand his wife, and at the same time brought her as a present a kid of the flock. When he discovered what had been done, his anger knew no bounds;

mson mands his fe.

and in vain did her father try to soothe him by offering him another of his daughters, younger and fairer than the former. Samson paid no heed to his excuses, neither did he accept his offer, but rejoined: "From this day I shall be blameless in what I do against the Philistines, for I will do you evils."

He burns the corn of the Philistines.

His first act of vengeance was not long in coming, and was of a most peculiar nature. Having caught 300 foxes, he tied them two and two by their tails; and fastening a lighted torch to each pair, let them go, that they might run about hither and thither. Rushing madly in all directions, they carried destruction into the neighbouring fields and vineyards. Not only the corn that had been cut and brought together, but that which was yet standing, was all burnt, as were also the vineyards and the olive-groves. On inquiry, the Philistines discovered the author of all this mischief, and having also learnt the motive that had prompted the action, they were enraged not so much against Samson as against his father-in-law, whom they considered responsible for their misfortunes. Assembling, therefore, in large numbers before his house, they set it on fire, and both Samson's wife and her father perished in the flames.

Samson slays 1,000 Philistines.

Samson's anger was not yet appeased. He said to the Philistines: "Although you have done this, yet will I be revenged of you, and then will I be quiet." He shortly afterwards fell upon them and slaughtered a great number, after which he retired to the rock of Etam, where he dwelt in a cave. But the Philistines gathered an army together and advanced into the land of Juda to demand the surrender of Samson; whereupon the men of Juda, fearing that the Philistines might wreak vengeance upon them, went to the number of 3,000 and surrounded the cavern to which Samson had betaken himself for security. They cried out to him that

they had come to bind him, and to deliver him into the hands of the Philistines. In reply he made but one request, that they would not kill him; and when he had received their solemn promise to that effect, he quietly allowed himself to be bound with two new cords. Thus firmly secured, they led him to the camp of the Philistines, who received him with a shout of joy, thinking that now at length they had their enemy in their power. But the Spirit of the Lord at that moment came upon Samson, and with one effort of his strength he snapped asunder the cords which bound him, as though they were mere threads. Then looking round, and seeing the jawbone of an ass lying near at hand, he seized it, and, armed with this simple weapon, wrought such havoc among the Philistines that a thousand of them were soon stretched dead upon the ground, while the rest fled in consternation. From this feat of Samson the place was afterwards known as Lechi, or the place of the Jawbone. In exultation at his victory, Samson exclaimed: "With the jawbone of an ass, with the jaw of the colt of asses, I have destroyed them, and have slain a thousand men."

He is miraculously refreshed with water.

The exertion he had displayed brought on an excessive thirst, and he cried to the Lord: "Thou hast given this very great deliverance and victory into the hand of Thy servant: and, behold, I die of thirst, and shall fall into the hands of the uncircumcised." God was moved with pity for His servant; and, from a great tooth in the jawbone, caused to issue such a copious stream of water that Samson was enabled to quench his thirst. The draught not only refreshed his spirit, but restored him to his usual strength and vigour.

The Philistines, who were now afraid to meet Samson openly, still kept a strict watch over all his movements, and on one occasion observed him enter a certain house in

Gaza. When the news spread that he was in their midst, they made fast the gates of the city, and placed men in ambush, so as to cut off his every means of escape. By chance Samson was made aware of their intention. Rising up at midnight he hastened to the city gates, and with a mighty effort wrenched them from their hinges; then placing them upon his shoulders, together with their posts and beams, to the amazement of his enemies he bore them in triumph up the hill that faces Hebron, and there laid them down.

Samson carries away the gates of Gaza.

After this he fell in love with a woman named Dalila, who dwelt in the valley of Sorec; and when the princes of the Philistines heard of his attachment they came to her and said: "Deceive him, and learn of him wherein his great strength lieth, and how we may be able to overcome him, to bind and afflict him: which, if thou shalt do, we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver." Influenced by the promise of so great a reward, she willingly consented to try to discover the secret of his strength. She artfully plied him with questions, and asked him the cause of that strength by which he so much excelled all others. Samson answered her: "If I shall be bound with seven cords made of sinews not yet dry, I shall be weak like other men." She hastened to convey the news to the Philistines, who supplied her with seven such cords, and sent a body of men to lie in wait, that they might rush in upon him on a given signal from Dalila. While Samson was asleep she bound him with the cords, and of a sudden cried out: "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" Instantly, snapping his bonds as a man would break a thread of burnt tow, he sprang to his feet.

Samson snaps his bonds asunder.

Dalila then said to him: "Behold thou hast mocked me, and hast told me a false thing; but now at least, tell me wherewith thou mayest be bound." He answered:

"If I shall be bound with new ropes that were never in work, I shall be weak and like other men." Again, after waiting for a suitable opportunity, she bound him as he had said, and when she thought him secure, called out as before: "Samson, the Philistines are upon thee!" In a moment he was up, having broken the bands as though they were but cobwebs.

Samson is in vain bound with ropes.

She now began to grow impatient with him, and said: "How long dost thou deceive me, and tell me lies? Show me wherewith thou mayest be bound." Samson replied: "If thou plattest the seven locks of my head with a lace, and tying them round about a nail, fastenest it in the ground, I shall be weak." While he slept, she bound his hair in the way he had explained to her, and suddenly called out that the Philistines were at hand. But the result was as before. With the greatest ease he tore out of the ground the nail to which he was tied.

For the third time Samson avoids Dalila's snares.

She now upbraided him with want of love for her in having deceived her so often, and again began to press him more earnestly, continually wearying him for many days, till at last, worn out with her repeated requests, he disclosed the truth to her. "The razor," he said, "hath never come upon my head, for I am a Nazarite: if my head be shaven, my strength shall depart from me, and I shall become weak, and shall be like other men." Straightway she communicated her discovery to the Philistines, and asked them to come up at once, because he had now opened his heart to her. While, therefore, he was in a deep sleep she had him deprived of his locks; then pushing him with her hand, she exclaimed: "Samson, behold the Philistines!" Awaking suddenly, he said in his mind: "I will go out as I did before, and shake myself." But he did not know that the Lord was departed from him. Then did the

Samson falls into the hands of the Philistines.

Philistines seize upon him, and, after putting out his eyes, bound him in chains and conducted him in triumph to Gaza. There, deprived of his sight and reduced to a most pitiable condition, he was condemned to the toilsome task of grinding corn in prison. After a time, however, his hair began to grow again and his strength to return with it.

Death of Samson.

The princes of the Philistines being gathered together to offer sacrifices to their god Dagon, they made merry, and in triumph cried out: "Our god hath delivered our enemy Samson into our hands, him that destroyed our country and killed very many." They thereupon gave orders for Samson to be brought forth to make sport for them. He was accordingly led out of prison and conducted by a boy to the temple, there to give amusement to his mocking enemies, who ridiculed and insulted him in his misfortune. When at length he grew weary and fatigued, he asked the lad who guided him to let him rest against the pillars that supported the temple. Now the temple was full of men and women, and all the princes of the Philistines were there; moreover, about 3,000 persons of both sexes were assembled on the roof and upper parts of the building, to gaze on this terror of their country and to deride him. Then Samson called upon the Lord, saying: "O Lord God, remember me, and restore to me now my former strength, that I may revenge myself on my enemies, and for the loss of my two eyes I may take one revenge." After he had finished his petition, he seized a pillar with each hand, and praying that he, too, might die with the Philistines, shook the pillars, until with a mighty crash, the temple fell, so that many more were killed in his death than he had killed before in his life. His kinsmen found his body, and buried it between Saraa and Esthaol, in the burying-place of his father Manue, after he had judged Israel for twenty years.

Before proceeding to recount the story of Ruth, we here append a list of the fifteen Judges who ruled Israel. As Debbora is considered to have continued in the exercise of her functions along with Barac, after the victory which they gained over Sisara, she is mentioned in conjunction with him as the *fourth* Judge. The lives of Heli and Samuel will be found recorded in the beginning of the *First Book of Kings*. The Judges, then, in the order in which they appear in the Sacred Writings were:

(1) *Othoniel;* (2) *Aod;* (3) *Samgar;* (4) *Debbora and Barac;* (5) *Gedeon;* (6) *Abimelech;* (7) *Thola;* (8) *Jair;* (9) *Jephte;* (10) *Abesan;* (11) *Ahialon;* (12) *Abdon;* (13) *Samson;* (14) *Heli;* (15) *Samuel.*

THE BOOK OF RUTH

This Book receives its name from the person whose history is recorded in it. From being a Gentile, Ruth became a convert to the true faith, and marrying Booz, the great-grandfather of David, she thus was one of those from whom Christ was descended, and an illustrious figure of the Gentile Church. Christ, then, proceeded from the Gentiles as well as from the Jews, and His grace is given to both. The events mentioned in the Book of Ruth took place under some of the Judges, so that we may consider the book as an appendix to the preceding one, and a preface to the history of the kings. It was probably written by the prophet Samuel.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF RUTH

Noemi in the land of Moab.

In the days of one of the Judges there came a famine in the land; and a certain man of Bethlehem-Juda, named Elimelech, together with his wife Noemi and their two sons, Mahalon and Chelion, went to sojourn in the land of Moab. Here Elimelech died, and his two sons took wives of the women

of Moab, one of whom was named Orpha, the other Ruth. About ten years afterwards, Mahalon and Chelion both died, and Noemi was left with her two daughters-in-law.

Ruth's resolve.

When at length she heard that the famine had ceased in the land of Israel, Noemi resolved to return to her own country, and made known her intention to Orpha and Ruth, who could not endure the thought of being parted from her, and declared that they would accompany her. But Noemi exhorted them to stay, and not to think of leaving their own country. She said to them: "Go ye home to your own people, and may the Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me: may He grant you to find rest in the houses of the husbands which you shall take." She then kissed them and bade them farewell; but they would not be comforted, and with tears declared again and again· "We will go on with thee to thy people." Orpha, at length overcome by the arguments of Noemi, consented to go back; but Ruth remained unshaken in her resolve, and clung to her mother-in-law, who continued to urge her to return with her kinswoman. "Be not against me," said Ruth, "to desire that I should leave thee and depart, for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go, and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die; and there will I be buried." Seeing that Ruth was steadfast in her determination to go with her, Noemi ceased to oppose her will, and did not persuade her any more to return to her friends. They therefore set out together for Bethlehem. When they were come into the city, the report quickly spread that Noemi had returned, and the women going out to meet her, exclaimed: "This is that Noemi"! But she said to them: "Call me not Noemi (*beautiful*), but call me Mara (*bitter*), for the Almighty hath quite filled me with

bitterness." Thus did Noemi return with Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, from the land of her sojournment at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth gleans in the field of Booz.

Soon after their return to Bethlehem, Ruth said to Noemi: "If thou wilt, I will go into the field, and glean the ears of corn that escape the hands of the reapers wheresoever I shall find grace with one who will be favourable to me." Noemi willingly gave her consent, and it chanced that Ruth went to a field that belonged to a man named Booz, who was very rich and powerful, and moreover a kinsman of Noemi's husband, Elimelech. While Ruth was in the field, Booz came to see how the work was progressing, and going up to the reapers, said: "The Lord be with you." To which they replied: "The Lord bless thee." Then Booz inquired of the man that was set over the reapers who the stranger was. He answered: "This is the Moabitess who came with Noemi, and she desired leave to glean the ears of corn that remain, following the steps of the reapers: she hath been in the field from morning till now, and hath not gone home for one moment." Booz went up to Ruth and said to her: "Hear me, daughter: do not go to glean in any other field, and do not depart from this place, but keep with my maids, and follow where they reap, for I have charged my young men not to molest thee; and if thou art thirsty, go to the vessels, and drink of the waters whereof the servants drink." Ruth bowed down before him and said: "Whence cometh this to me, that I should find grace before thy eyes, and that thou shouldst vouchsafe to take notice of me, a woman of another country?" He answered her: "All hath been told to me that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law after the death of thy husband, and how thou hast left thy parents, and the land wherein thou wast born, and art come to a people which thou knewest not hereto-

fore. The Lord render unto thee for thy work, and mayest thou receive a full reward of the Lord the God of Israel, to whom thou art come, and under whose wings thou art fled. At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar." Ruth followed the instructions of Booz, and sitting down with the reapers, partook of their repast. Booz, moreover, secretly gave orders to his servants purposely to let fall handfuls of corn in her way that she might gather them without shame.

Booz.

In the evening, Ruth, full of joy, returned to Noemi, after beating out with a rod as much barley from her gleanings as would fill an ephi.* She told her mother-in-law all that had befallen her, whereupon Noemi exclaimed: "Blessed be he of the Lord, because the same kindness which he showed to the living, he hath kept also to the dead. The man is our kinsman." For many days in succession Ruth kept close to the maids of Booz, and continued to glean with them, till all the barley and the wheat were laid up in the barns.

Booz and Ruth.

Encouraged by the kindness displayed by Booz, and full of gratitude to God, Noemi said to Ruth: "My daughter, I will seek rest for thee, and will provide that it may be well with thee." She entertained hopes that she could engage Booz, according to the law, to take Ruth in marriage if others, more nearly akin, should refuse to espouse their kinsman's widow. She therefore directed Ruth how to proceed in seeking the recognition of her lawful rights of kinship. Booz acknowledged her just claim, blessed Ruth in the name of the Lord, and praised her fidelity to the memory of her deceased husband in seeking to keep up his name and family by marrying his relation according to the law of Moses, and not following after others. He said to her: "I do not deny myself

* A measure containing about $6\frac{1}{2}$ gallons.

to be near of kin, but there is another nearer than I. If he will take thee by the right of kin, all is well; but if he will not, I will undoubtedly take thee, as the Lord liveth." He then gave her six measures of barley, and she returned again to Noemi.

Booz and his kinsman.

Next day Booz went up to the gate of the city, and sat there; and when he saw the kinsman of whom he had spoken going by, he said to him: "Turn aside for a little while, and sit down here." The man did so. He next invited ten men of the ancients of the city, and bade them also sit down. Then turning to the kinsman he said: "Noemi, who is returned from the country of Moab, will sell a parcel of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I would have thee to understand this, and would tell thee before all that sit here, and before the ancients of my people. If thou wilt take possession of it by the right of kindred, buy it and possess it; but if it please thee not, tell me so, that I may know what I have to do. For there is no nearer kinsman besides thee, who art first, and me, who am second." On the other expressing his willingness to comply with the suggestion, Booz added: "When thou shalt buy the field at the woman's hand, thou must take also Ruth, the Moabitess who was the wife of the deceased, to raise up the name of thy kinsman in his inheritance." The man made answer: "I yield up my right of next of kin, for I must not cut off the posterity of my own family. Do thou make use of my privilege, which I profess I do willingly forego."

he law garding heritance.

In Israel if anyone yielded his right to another, a certain ceremony prescribed by law was to be observed: the shoe of the one who gave up his right was taken off in presence of the elders, and handed to the one to whom he wished the right to be transferred. This being done, Booz said to the ancients

and to all the people: "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and Chelion's, and Mahalon's, of the hand of Noemi, and have taken to wife Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of Mahalon, to raise up the name of the deceased in his inheritance, lest his name be cut off from among his family, and his brethren, and his people. You, I say, are witnesses of this thing." Then all the people that were in the gateway of the city, and the ancients, answered: "We are witnesses: the Lord make this woman who cometh into thy house like Rachel and Lia, who built up the house of Israel, that she may be an example of virtue in Ephrata, and may have a famous name in Bethlehem."

Booz marries Ruth.

Booz accordingly married Ruth, and the Lord blessed them with a son, whom they named Obed. Then the women came to congratulate Noemi, and said: "Blessed be the Lord who hath not suffered thy family to want a successor, that thou shouldst have one to comfort thy soul, and cherish thy old age; for he is born of thy daughter-in-law who loveth thee." And Noemi, taking the child, laid it in her bosom, and was nurse to it. In course of time Obed became the father of Isai, the father of David.

Christ sprung from Gentiles as well as from Jews.

Salmon, the father of Booz, had married Rahab, who concealed the two spies in Jericho previous to its capture by Josue; and thus among the ancestors of our Blessed Lord we find two who, before their conversion, did not profess the true faith, viz., the two Gentile women, Rahab and Ruth.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

OTHERWISE CALLED

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

This and the following Book are called by the Hebrews the *Books of Samuel* because they contain the history of Samuel. They also contain the lives of the two kings, Saul and David, whom he anointed; from which circumstance they are more commonly named the *First and Second Books of Kings*. The general opinion is that Samuel composed the First Book as far as the twenty-fifth chapter; and that the prophets Nathan and Gad finished the First, and wrote the Second. The authors of the Third and Fourth Books of Kings were also prophets whose names are not known with any degree of certainty. The transactions of Heli, Samuel, and Saul, and the persecutions which David sustained from the last-named, form the subject of the First Book, and occupy the space of 100 years. The period covered by all the Four Books is well-nigh 600 years—B.C. 1155 to B.C. 588.

CHAPTER LI

BIRTH OF SAMUEL—DEATH OF HELI, B.C. 1116

THERE was a certain Levite of Mount Ephraim, named Elcana, who had two wives, Anna and Phenenna. Phenenna had several children, but Anna, although she had been married many years to Elcana, was still childless, and for this had to endure the bitter taunts of her more fortunate rival. Overwhelmed with sorrow, Anna prayed earnestly that God would be mindful of her, and remove her reproach.

nna, wife of lcana.

Every year, on the great festival days, Elcana went with his family to adore and to offer sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Silo. It was on these occasions that Phenenna became more troublesome than usual, and at length carried her provocations so far, that Anna's heart was so overwhelmed with grief that she wept and did not eat. Then her husband said to her:

nna's grief.

"Anna, why weepest thou, and why dost thou not eat, and why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?" Anna complied with the entreaty of her husband, and having partaken of a little food, went to the Tabernacle, and with many tears, prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt look down, and wilt be mindful of me, and not forget Thy handmaid, and wilt give to Thy servant a man-child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Birth of Samuel, the last Judge.

While she was thus weeping and praying, Heli the High Priest, as he sat before the Tabernacle, observed her; and when he saw her lips move, but did not hear her voice, he thought she had indulged too freely in wine, and upbraided her accordingly. Anna patiently submitted to the reproof, and with the greatest respect made answer: "Not so, my lord: for I am an exceedingly unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine nor any strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial; for out of the abundance of my sorrow and grief have I spoken till now." Then Heli said to her; "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition which thou hast asked of Him." Anna arose full of hope and joy, and returned with her husband to their home at Ramatha; and the Lord remembered her, and rewarded her faith by giving her a son whom she named Samuel, that is, *asked of God.*

Samuel consecrated to God.

When Elcana, together with his household, went up to offer to the Lord the solemn sacrifice, Anna said to him: "I will not go till the child be weaned, and till I may carry him, that he may appear before the Lord, and may abide there." She fulfilled her promise; and when the time came, she

brought Samuel to the Tabernacle at Silo, and consecrated him to God all the days of his life as a Nazarite. As she offered the child to Heli, she said: "I beseech thee, my lord, as thy soul liveth, I am that woman who stood before thee here, praying to the Lord. For this child did I pray, and the Lord hath granted my petition which I asked of Him; therefore I have lent him to the Lord all the days of his life." Then, in the fulness of her joy, she poured out her gratitude to God, and broke forth into that beautiful canticle of praise, in which she foretold the glory of the Messias and His Church. "My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God: my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I have joyed in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord is; for there is no other beside Thee, and there is none strong like our God. . . The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, He humbleth and He exalteth. He raiseth up the needy from the dust, . . . that He may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory. For the poles of the earth are the Lord's, and upon them He hath set the world. He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; because no man shall prevail by his own strength. The adversaries of the Lord shall fear Him, and upon them shall He thunder in the heavens. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give empire to His King, and shall exalt the horn of His Christ" (1 Kings ii. 1-10).

How forcibly this canticle reminds us of the *Magnificat* of our Lady, not only from its resemblance in form, but from the occasion, too, on which it was uttered—a fact which serves as a strong argument for the Messianic character of the last verse.

Elcana went back to Ramatha; but the boy Samuel remained in the Tabernacle, where, girded with a linen ephod, he ministered in the sight of the Lord, before Heli

the High Priest. And his mother made him a little coat, which she brought to him when she went up with her husband to offer solemn sacrifice. Heli blessed Elcana and Anna; and, in addition to Samuel, God gave them three sons and two daughters.

Samuel remains in the Tabernacle.

In striking contrast to the pious Samuel were the two sons of the High Priest, Ophni and Phinees, children of Belial, who did not know the Lord, but denied Him by their works. They took of the offerings not only what lawfully belonged to them, but whatever else they pleased; and by their rapacity, and abominable deeds of lust at the very door of the Tabernacle, succeeded in withdrawing the people from coming to sacrifice to the Lord. Men complained of their iniquity to Heli, who, instead of suppressing the scandalous conduct of his sons by the utmost severity, merely rebuked them for their wickedness. His reproofs were in vain; and when at length they had filled up the measure of their crimes, there came to Heli a man of God, who said to him: "Thus saith the Lord: 'Did I not plainly appear to thy father's house when they were in the house of Pharao? And I chose him out of all the tribe of Israel to be My priest, to go up to My altar, and burn incense to Me, and to wear the ephod before Me; and I gave to thy father's house of all the sacrifices of the children of Israel. Thou hast rather honoured thy sons than Me, to eat the first-fruits of every sacrifice of My people Israel. I said indeed that thy house should minister in My sight for ever. Far be this from Me; but whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify, but they that despise Me shall be despised. Thou shalt see thy rival in the temple in all the prosperity of Israel, and there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever. And this shall be a sign to thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, Ophni and Phinees: in one day

The wickedness of Heli's sons.

they shall both of them die. And I will raise up a faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart.'"

God's judgment fulfilled.

The judgment spoken against the house of Heli was partly fulfilled when Abiathar, of the race of Heli, was removed from the Priesthood by king Solomon, and *his rival*, that is, a priest of another race substituted in his place in the person of Sadoc. But it was more fully accomplished in the New Testament, when the Priesthood of Aaron gave place to that of Christ.

Samuel is four times called by the Lord.

When Heli was old, and his eyes were grown dim, the boy Samuel, who had as usual retired to rest within the Tabernacle, was suddenly aroused from his slumbers by a voice calling him by name. Thinking it was Heli who called him, Samuel rose up at once, and going to the High Priest said: "Here am I: for thou didst call me." Heli replied: "I did not call thee: go back and sleep." Scarcely had he composed himself to sleep again, when the voice was heard calling him a second time. As before, Samuel hastened to the High Priest, and said: "Here am I: for thou calledst me." He answered: "I did not call thee, my son: return and sleep." After the same thing had happened a third time, Heli understood that the Lord called the boy, and he said to Samuel: "Go, and sleep; and if He shall call thee any more, thou shalt say: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'" Samuel withdrew to take his rest; and when the voice called to him for the fourth time, he answered as the High Priest had commanded: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." The Lord said to him: "I have foretold unto Heli that I will judge his house for ever, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings for ever."

Samuel then slept; and when morning came, was afraid to tell the vision to Heli. But Heli called him and said: "What is the word that the Lord hath spoken to thee? I beseech thee hide it not from me. Hide not one word of all that was said to thee." Samuel obeyed; whereupon the High Priest humbly submitted to the Divine decree and said: "It is the Lord: let Him do what is good in His sight." The boy grew, and the Lord was with him, and from that day, all Israel, from Dan to Bersabee, knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord.

Samuel tells the vision to Heli.

War having again broken out between the Israelites and the Philistines, the latter gathered together their forces at Aphec, in the tribe of Juda, not far from Maspha. The Israelites themselves were encamped at a place later known as Eben-ezer, or the *Stone of Help*, so called from the *help* which the Lord was pleased afterwards to give to Israel through the prayers of Samuel. Scarcely had the two armies joined battle when the Israelites, seized with sudden panic, turned their backs and fled, hotly pursued by the Philistines, who succeeded in slaughtering as many as 4,000 of them.

The Philistines defeat the Israelites at Aphec.

Broken and dispirited, the survivors returned to the camp; and when the ancients, who had assembled there, learnt what had happened they were overcome with grief, and exclaimed "Why hath the Lord defeated us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch unto us the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Silo, and let it come in the midst of us, that it may save us from the hand of our enemies." Their confidence was praiseworthy, but their sins merited the severest punishments; and without stopping to consider that their infidelity rendered them unworthy of the Divine protection, they at once

The Israelites send for the Ark of God.

despatched messengers to Silo, and the Ark of the Covenant, accompanied by Ophni and Phinees, the two sons of Heli, was brought into the camp. Its appearance was the signal for an outburst of joy; and such a shout of triumph arose, that the Philistines, hearing the jubilant cry, were struck with astonishment, and said one to another: "God is come into their camp: woe to us. Who shall deliver us from the hand of these high Gods? These are the Gods that struck Egypt with all the plagues in the desert." Their leaders, however, far from being disheartened, thus addressed their followers: "Take courage, and behave like men, ye Philistines, lest you come to be servants to the Hebrews, as they have served you: take courage and fight."

The Ark is taken by the Philistines.

The battle was begun; and instead of victory falling to the Israelites, as they so confidently expected, the Philistines inflicted on them such a crushing defeat that 30,000 fell on the field. Ophni and Phinees were numbered among the slain, and worse still, the Ark of God was taken by the enemy. That same day, a man of Benjamin, who had escaped from the field of battle, arrived breathless at Silo, with his clothes rent and his head covered with dust, the bearer of the terrible news. His message filled the people with consternation, and cries of lamentation were heard throughout the city. Since the departure of the Ark, Heli, trembling for its safety, had taken up his post seated on a stool by the side of the road near the entrance to the Tabernacle, where he anxiously awaited tidings of the battle.

eath of Heli, e 14th Judge, c. 1116.

Hearing the cry of woe in the city, he asked: "What meaneth the noise of this uproar?" At this moment, the bearer of the fatal intelligence came up and said: "I am he that came from the battle, and have fled out of the field this

day." Heli eagerly asked: "What is there done, my son?" The messenger answered: "Israel is fled from the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter of the people: moreover thy two sons are dead, and the Ark of God is taken." As soon as he named the Ark of God, Heli fell from his stool backwards and broke his neck and died, for he was far advanced in age, being now ninety-eight years old. He had judged Israel forty years.

Ichabod.

That same day, the wife of Phinees, after hearing that her husband and her father-in-law were both dead, and that the Ark of God had fallen into the hands of the enemy, died in giving birth to a son, whom she named Ichabod (*Where is the glory?*), for she said: "The glory is gone from Israel, because the Ark of God was taken."

CHAPTER LII

THE ARK AMONG THE PHILISTINES—ITS RETURN

The afflictions of the Philistines.

In spite of their victory the Philistines soon began to perceive that they had brought the greatest misfortunes upon themselves. From the *Stone of Help* they took the Ark of God and carried it into Azotus, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, and there, as a trophy of their victory, they placed it in the temple of their own god Dagon. Next day, to the surprise of the Azotians, the idol of Dagon was found lying upon its face on the ground before the Ark. It was in vain that they set it up again: for on entering the temple early the following morning, they discovered it not only prostrate on the ground, but with its head and arms broken off and lying upon the threshold; from which circumstance arose the custom in Azotus, that they who entered the temple of Dagon should never tread on the threshold. But terrible evils were now to befall the Azotians themselves on account o

the Ark. God afflicted them with a painful disorder, by causing their bodies to be so tormented with emerods, that many of the inhabitants died. Mice, too, in swarms overran their fields and destroyed their crops.

The Ark sent from city to city.

The people were filled with alarm, and resolved that the Ark should stay no longer among them, but that it should be moved about from one city to another. It was first taken to Geth, and from Geth it was sent to Accaron, carrying with it disease and death to young and old. The people of Accaron were terrified at its approach, and cried out: "They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people." They therefore besought the lords of the Philistines to send it away, and allow it to return to the place whence it had been taken, lest all the people should perish. For seven months the Ark passed from city to city, and the cry of the people went up to heaven; for the fear of death was upon them, and the hand of God was exceedingly heavy.

The Ark to be sent back.

Unable to endure their sufferings longer, the Philistines called together their priests and diviners, and consulted them as to how they should send back the Ark. They answered: "If you send back the Ark of the God of Israel, send it not away empty, but render unto Him what you owe for sin, and then you shall be healed; and you shall know why His hand departeth not from you. According to the number of the provinces of the Philistines you shall make five golden emerods, and five golden mice, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel. Why do you harden your hearts, as Egypt and Pharao hardened their hearts? Did not he, after he was struck, let the people go, and they departed?" The people were then instructed to make ready a new cart on which they were to place the Ark, and beside it a little box containing the golden

figures. To the cart they were to harness two kine that had never before been yoked, and that had their calves shut up at home. The kine were to be left to go their own way, and if they took the direct road to Bethsames, it was to be as a sign that the evils that had befallen them were from the God of the Israelites; but if they went by any other way, then might it be known that the hand of God had not touched the Philistines, but that their troubles were the result of chance. No sooner were the kine let loose than they proceeded in the direction of Bethsames, lowing as they went along, but turning aside neither to the right hand nor to the left, while the lords of the Philistines followed at a distance to see the result.

The Ark at Bethsames.

It was the time of the harvest; and as soon as the men of Bethsames, who were reaping wheat in the valley, saw the Ark approaching, they left off their work and ran forward with joy to meet it. As though some person were driving the kine, they continued their onward course till they came into the field of a certain Josue, a Bethsamite, where they stopped of their own accord. In the field was a great stone, upon which the Levites rested the Ark and the box containing the golden offerings, and having cut up the wood of the cart, they killed the kine and laid them upon it, and offered them as a holocaust to the Lord.

The Ark taken to Cariathiarim.

But the joy of the Bethsamites was soon turned into grief and lamentation; for, moved by curiosity, they did what was unlawful even for the Levites to do. Drawing aside the coverings of the ark they presumed to look into it, and for their irreverence many were struck dead upon the spot. Thus, although the Ark was terrible to the infidels, it was equally so to those true believers who dared to treat it with disrespect. Filled with terror, the Bethsamites cried out: "Who shall be able to stand before the Lord

this holy God?" and in their alarm sent messengers to Cariathiarim, and besought the men of that city to come and fetch away the Ark. Their request was immediately complied with; and with every token of respect the Ark was conveyed to the house of Abinadab, in Gabaa, where it remained until the days of King David. Abinadab was a virtuous Levite, and his son Eleazar was sanctified and appointed to keep the Ark of the Lord.

Samuel's exhortation.

Samuel seized the opportunity of addressing the people, and exhorted them to cease from doing evil and to perform good works: "If you turn to the Lord," said he, "with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord. Serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." The children of Israel listened attentively to his words, and repenting of their sins, put away their false gods, and turned with all their hearts to serve the Lord. Samuel next gathered them together at Masphath, a town in the tribe of Juda, where, after humbly confessing their sins, they fasted and did penance for them.

Defeat of the Philistines at the Stone of Help.

It was while the Israelites were at Masphath that the Philistines, confident of an easy victory, marched suddenly upon them, and caused great consternation among them. In their alarm they turned to Samuel and besought him, saying: "Cease not to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel bade them be of good cheer, and promised them that God would assist them; then taking a lamb, he offered it as a holocaust to the Lord, and while he was thus engaged in offering the sacrifice the Philistines began the attack. Relying on their numbers they looked upon victory as certain, but the greatness of their army only served for their greater destruction. In answer to Samuel's

prayer, God sent a violent thunderstorm upon them; and so terribly vivid were the lightning flashes around them, that they were filled with alarm and fled in the greatest confusion, pursued by the victorious Israelites. The pursuit was continued as far as Bethchar; and such slaughter was wrought among the terrified foe, that for many years the power of the Philistines was broken—"The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." The cities which the Philistines had taken, from Accaron as far as Geth, were now restored to Israel, and there was peace also between Israel and the Amorrhites. In memory of the victory, Samuel set up a stone between Masphath and Sen, and he called the place Eben-ezer, the *Stone of Help*, saying: "Thus far the Lord hath helped us."

Samuel as Judge.

Samuel's office of judge was now established; and we are told that he ruled over Israel all the days of his life, probably as sole judge for twenty years, and conjointly with Saul till he died. He was the last to hold that office before Saul was anointed the first king over Israel; and though his two sons, Joel and Abia, are said to have acted as judges in Bersabee, we must regard them as Samuel's delegates in the southern parts of the country. But Joel and Abia walked not in the footsteps of their father. Yielding to avarice, they took bribes, and so perverted judgment, that in the end their misconduct gave occasion to the people to demand a king who might not be tempted by bribes. Every year Samuel visited Bethel, Galgal, and Masphath for the sake of dispensing justice, after which he returned to his native place Ramatha, where he had built an altar to the Lord.

Samuel's sacrifices.

Although we read of Samuel's offering sacrifice, this must have been by special dispensation, or by the hands of the priests, as he was a Levite and not of the family of Aaron.

Among the works of Samuel are mentioned the *Schools of the Prophets* which he established at Ramatha, Bethel, Galgal, and Masphath. Here he gathered together into schools or colleges promising youths, who were trained up to compose and sing canticles and praises to God, and to explain the prophecies: such in Holy Writ are called *prophets*, and their singing praises to God is called *prophesying*. At their head they had a superior, whom they called *Father*, and to him God frequently revealed future things; the rest were termed his *sons*, and by him were instructed in the duties of that office which they were afterwards destined to fulfil. Some of them, like Saul, were inspired only for a time. Having been themselves trained and taught, the prophets, whether still residing within the college, or having left its precincts, had the task of teaching others, and must therefore have been of immense service in keeping alive and spreading the knowledge of the true religion.

Schools of the Prophets.

PART V

FROM THE INSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY TO THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM ON THE DEATH OF SOLOMON

B.C. 1095 to B.C. 975

CHAPTER LIII

SAUL ANOINTED KING, B.C. 1095

So intense had now become the discontent of the Israelites with the sons of Samuel that the ancients assembling together came to Samuel and said: "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: make us a king to judge us, as all nations have." Their words grieved Samuel, and he prayed to the Lord that He would direct him how to act under such trying difficulties. He was displeased, not so much because they had rejected him, but because they had shown ingratitude to God who had distinguished them from all other nations, had taken the government upon Himself, and had appointed the Judges merely as His delegates.

The people desire a king.

Hitherto the government of Israel had been a theocracy, in which God Himself immediately ruled by laws which He had enacted, and by Judges extraordinarily raised up by Himself; and therefore He complained that His people rejected Him in desiring a change of government, and in wishing to appoint their own magistrates. "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee," He said to Samuel, "for they have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not

End of the Theocracy.

reign over them; but yet testify to them, and foretell to them the right of the king that shall reign over them." The holy prophet made known to the assembly of the ancients the abuses to which they would be subjected under the despotic rule of a king, who would oppress both them and their children, and would require such heavy exactions at their hands that, in the bitterness of their sorrow, they would cry out to the Lord to be delivered from his oppression; but that the Lord would not hear them in that day, because they had desired a king for themselves. The people would not heed the words of Samuel, but grew louder in their demands, declaring passionately: "Nay; there shall be a king over us, and we also will be like all nations, and our king shall judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles for us!" Samuel carried back their reply to the Lord, who bade him hearken to their voice, and grant their request; he then dismissed the ancients, every man to his own city, there to wait till God should make known the choice of their future sovereign.

Saul, the son of Cis.

Now there was at this time a man of the tribe of Benjamin, valiant and strong, whose name was Cis, the son of Abiel; and he had a son named Saul, a man of comely appearance, and there was not among the Israelites a handsomer person than he: "from his shoulders and upward he appeared above all the people." On one occasion, when his father's asses had strayed, and were lost, Saul, accompanied by one of the servants, was sent in quest of them. From tribe to tribe he passed, but found them not; and at length, fearing that his father might be growing anxious on account of his long absence, he resolved to give up the search and return home. By this time he had wandered as far as Ramatha. But his servant said to him: "Behold there is a man of God in this city, a famous man, and all that he saith cometh certainly to pass. Now, therefore, let us go thither;

perhaps he may tell us of our way." At first Saul raised the objection that they had not wherewith to make the customary present to the prophet; but when the difficulty was removed by the servant showing him a piece of silver which he still had left, the proposal was agreed to.

God's choice of Saul.

As they went up the ascent which leads to the city, they met some of the maidens who had come out to draw water, and inquired of them concerning the prophet. They answered: "Behold he is before you, make haste; to-day he came into the city, for there is a sacrifice in the high place." Now the day before, the Lord had appeared to Samuel and said: "To-morrow about this same hour I will send thee a man of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be ruler over My people Israel, and he shall save them out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked down upon them, because their cry is come to Me."

Saul entertained by Samuel.

As they entered the city, Saul chanced to meet Samuel near the gate, and thus accosted him: "Tell me, I pray thee, where is the house of the seer?" Samuel answered: "I am the seer; go up before me to the high place, that thou mayest eat with me to-day, and I will let thee go in the morning; and tell thee all that is in thy heart. As for the asses which were lost three days ago, be not solicitous, because they are found. And for whom shall be all the best things of Israel? Shall they not be for thee and for all thy father's house?" Saul made answer: "Am I not of the least tribe of Israel, and my kindred the last among all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then hast thou spoken this word to me?" Then Samuel conducted Saul and his servant into his house, and gave them a place at the head of those that were invited, commanding the cook to set before Saul the portion which was generally assigned to the most eminent guest. When the banquet

was over, they went down from the high place into the city, and Samuel had a bed prepared for Saul on the flat roof of his house, such an airy situation being most agreeable in hot climates.

Saul anointed king.

Early in the morning Samuel, having roused Saul from sleep, accompanied him out of the city; and when they had gone a little distance, he said to him: "Tell thy servant to pass on, but stand thou still awhile, that I may tell thee the word of the Lord." Then the prophet, taking a little vial of oil, poured it upon his head and kissed him, saying: "Behold, the Lord hath anointed thee to be prince over His inheritance, and thou shalt deliver His people out of the hands of their enemies. Moreover, this shall be a sign unto thee that God hath anointed thee to be prince: when thou shalt depart from me this day, thou shalt find two men by the sepulchre of Rachel, and they shall say to thee: 'The asses are found which thou wentest to seek.' And when thou shalt depart thence, and shalt come to the oak of Thabor, there shall meet thee three men going up to Bethel, one carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread, and the third a bottle of wine. They will salute thee, and will give thee two loaves, and thou shalt take them at their hand, after which thou shalt come to the hill of God (*Gabaa*), where the garrison of the Philistines is: there thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a timbrel, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall be prophesying. The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee also, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be changed into another man. When therefore these signs shall happen to thee, do whatsoever thy hand shall find, for the Lord is with thee. And thou shalt go down before me to Galgal that thou mayest offer an oblation, and sacrifice victims of peace: seven days shalt thou wait, till

I come to thee, and I will show thee what thou art to do."

Saul accepted by the people.

All things came to pass as Samuel had foretold; and when the company of prophets met Saul, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied in the midst of them. Those who had known him before, seeing that he was with the prophets, and prophesied, said to one another: "What is this that hath happened to the son of Cis? Is Saul also among the prophets?" Saul returned to his father's house after the Spirit had ceased to inspire him, and the prophets had departed. When the time came for the people to elect as king the one whom God should point out by lots, Samuel called an assembly of the tribes at Maspha. Here he once more reproved them for having rejected God who alone had saved them in the midst of evils and tribulations, and for having, instead of Him, desired a king to rule over them. He then proceeded to arrange them by their tribes and families. The lot fell first on the tribe of Benjamin; of the tribe of Benjamin the family of Metri was taken; and lastly out of the family of Metri the choice fell upon Saul, the son of Cis. But Saul, judging himself unfit for the exalted dignity, hid himself; and when they sought him he was nowhere to be found. The Lord, however, made known Saul's place of concealment, and messengers were at once despatched to bring him before the assembly. And when his towering figure was seen in the midst of the people, Samuel turned to the multitude and said: "Surely you see him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people:" whereupon with one voice all cried out: "God save the king!"

Samuel next made known to the people the law of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book which he laid up before the Lord in the sanctuary. He then dismissed every one to his own house. Saul also took his departure for his home

at Gabaa, and there accompanied him a part of the army whose hearts God had touched. But "the children of Belial," seditious men, murmured: "Shall this fellow be able to save us?" When they showed their contempt for him by refusing to bring the customary presents in testimony of their submission, Saul held his peace, and dissembled as though he heard them not.

The assembly dismissed.

CHAPTER LIV

SAUL'S VICTORY OVER THE AMMONITES—RETIREMENT OF SAMUEL

For some time after his election as king, Saul continued to reside at his own home in Gabaa, and a whole month passed away without any measures being taken for the deliverance of his country. But now an opportunity arose for striking a blow against the Ammonites, whose power had steadily grown since the days of Jephte. Under their king, Naas, they had besieged Jabes-Galaad, and such fear had their presence inspired that the citizens had offered to make a treaty with them. But Naas sent back this cruel and barbarous answer: "On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may pluck out all your right eyes, and make you a reproach in all Israel." He would not bereave them of sight altogether, that he might not be deprived of their services, but he would render them unfit for war, as the buckler covers the left eye; and people who shoot with bow and arrow keep it closed and take aim with their right. A delay of seven days was granted, in which they were to make up their minds; and this time they utilised by sending for help to Saul at Gabaa.

Naas, the Ammonite king.

The people of Gabaa were overcome with grief, and wept

aloud on hearing of the cruel straits to which the people of Jabes-Galaad were reduced. Saul was absent at the time; but when he came home from the field with the oxen, and heard the cry of the people, he demanded the cause of their lamenting. On the truth being made known to him his anger was roused, and the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him, he bade the messengers return, after promising that he would bring them assistance. He next took a yoke of oxen, which he slew and cut into pieces. The pieces were sent through all Israel by messengers, who were commanded to say: "Whosoever shall not come forth and follow Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." The people showed a ready obedience to the king's commands, and went out as one man, so that there assembled in Bezec 300,000 of the children of Israel, and of the men of Juda 30,000. It was the sixth day of the truce when the messengers returned from Saul with the promise that on the seventh day, before midday, Jabes-Galaad should be relieved. Relying on this pledge, the men of Jabes sent to Naas to say that in the morning they would come out to him, and that he might do to them according to his pleasure.

Saul prepares to help Jabes-Galaad.

When the morning of the seventh day was come, Saul divided his army into three companies, and by a rapid march came suddenly upon the unsuspecting Ammonites, who were thrown into the greatest confusion, and fell an easy prey to Saul and his army. Vast numbers of the enemy were slain, and so completely were their forces scattered, that we are told "not two of them were left together." The people were now moved with anger against those who had formerly shown their contempt for the newly-elected king, and going to Samuel they said: "Who is he that said: 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, and we will

Relief of Jabes-Galaad.

kill them." But when Saul was informed of their demand, he answered: "No man shall be killed this day, for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel." On the invitation of Samuel all now proceeded to Galgal, where Saul was again solemnly anointed, and the same ceremonies repeated that had been performed before, except the casting of lots. The occasion was celebrated with great rejoicing by Saul and all the men of Israel.

Samuel's address to the people.

Then it was that Samuel took the opportunity of drawing from the whole people a confession of his integrity, that the kings might follow the pattern which he had set them: "Behold," said he, "I have hearkened to your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you; and now the king goeth before you, but I am old and grey-headed. Speak of me before the Lord, and before His anointed, whether I have taken any man's ox or ass, if I have wronged any man, or if I have oppressed any man, if I have taken a bribe at any man's hand; and I will despise it this day, and will restore it to you." They cried out with one voice: "Thou hast not wronged us, nor oppressed us, nor taken aught at any man's hand." After reminding them of all that God had done for them from the time when their forefathers went down into Egypt; after recalling the many evils from which He had saved them, and their latest sin in preferring a king to reign over them, although the Lord their God was their king, he besought them to fear the Lord, and serve Him, and to hearken to His voice, if they and the king who reigned over them wished to be followers of the Lord their God. But if they were rebellious and did not listen to the voice of God, the hand of the Lord, he declared, should be upon them, and they should perish together.

To add weight to his words he promised them a sign from heaven. Although it was the time of the wheat-

harvest and the sky was cloudless, at his prayer the heavens were suddenly overcast, and the Lord sent such a storm of thunder and rain that the people were terrified, and cried out to Samuel, entreating him to pray to the Lord for them lest, because of their sins, they should die. Samuel said to them: "Fear not; but yet depart not from following the Lord, but serve Him with all your heart. Turn not aside after vain things, which shall never profit you nor deliver you, because they are vain; and the Lord will not forsake you for His great name's sake, because He hath sworn to make you His people."

A sign from heaven.

After promising to pray for them and to teach them the right way, Samuel thus brought to a close the twenty years of his being sole judge over Israel, although he must have continued to perform the office in conjunction with the king, as we gather from the Sacred Text: "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life."

Retirement of Samuel.

CHAPTER LV

WAR WITH THE PHILISTINES—BATTLE OF MACHMAS

After the Philistines had recovered from the effects of their great defeat at the Stone of Help (*Eben-ezer*), they began to renew their attacks on Israel; but Saul determined once for all to rid his country of this troublesome enemy. Having chosen 3,000 men, he sent his son Jonathan with 1,000 to take up a position at Gabaa, while he himself, with the remainder, occupied posts at Machmas and in the hills of Bethel. Falling suddenly upon the Philistine garrison stationed at Gabaa, Jonathan succeeded in routing and scattering it, whereupon the Israelites, elated by his victory, spread the

Jonathan defeats a Philistine garrison.

good news far and wide, and called upon their countrymen to take courage and rally against the hated foe. A ready response was made, and large numbers assembled to meet Saul at Galgal.

The Philistines at Machmas.

In the meantime the Philistines, burning to avenge the defeat of their companions at Gabaa, got together a mighty army, consisting of 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, besides an immense number of foot soldiers, and encamped at Machmas, from which place they issued forth in three companies and overran the whole country, plundering as they advanced. Moreover, to deprive the Hebrews of weapons, not a smith was allowed to remain in Israel, lest the people should make for themselves swords and spears. Even their ploughshares, and spades, and axes, and rakes, when they required sharpening, had to be taken to Philistine smiths. In their alarm Saul's followers began to drop off, and for safety fled to the woods and to the rocks, where they concealed themselves among the thickets and in caves; some even passed over the Jordan into the land of Gad and Galaad. This desertion continued till Saul was left with only 600 men, and he saw that he would lose these also if immediate steps were not taken to prevent their leaving him.

Saul is reproved by Samuel.

In reply to a message he had sent to Samuel, the prophet promised that he would be with him in seven days; and, as it was now the seventh day and he had not yet arrived, Saul offered the sacrifices himself. Hardly, however, was the holocaust consumed when Samuel was seen approaching. Saul at once went out to meet him, and with marked respect saluted him; but when Samuel found that the sacrifices were already ended, he said to Saul: "What hast thou done?" Saul answered: "Because I saw that the people slipped from me, and thou wast not come according to the days

appointed, and the Philistines were gathered together in Machmas, forced by necessity, I offered the holocaust." Samuel said to him: "Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God. If thou hadst not done thus, the Lord would now have established thy kingdom over Israel for ever; but thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought a man according to His own heart; and him hath He commanded to be prince over His people, because thou hast not observed that which the Lord commanded." Samuel then left him and went to Gabaa.

Jonathan's victory.

Saul also, together with his son Jonathan, went to Gabaa, accompanied by the 600 faithful followers, the great majority of whom were either entirely without weapons, or were armed in the rudest fashion with various implements of husbandry, and some, perhaps, with slings. At length Jonathan resolved on a most daring plan. Secretly leaving his father and the High Priest, he said to his armour-bearer: "Come, and let us go over to the garrison of the Philistines, which is on the other side of yonder place." Now the ascent leading to the enemy's camp lay between two steep rocks, named Boses and Sene. Jonathan encouraged his companion, and told him to trust in God, who was able to save them by the hands of a few as easily as by the power of many. The spirited reply of the armour-bearer determined him in his purpose. "Do," said he, "all that pleaseth thy mind: go whither thou wilt, and I will be with thee wheresoever thou hast a mind." Jonathan said: "Behold we will go over to these men; and when we shall be seen by them, if they tell us to stay till they come to us, let us stand in our place and not go up to them; but if they ask us to go up to them, let us go up, because the Lord hath delivered them into our hands: this shall be a sign

unto us." They accordingly discovered themselves to the Philistines, who, when they saw them, said to one another: "Behold the Hebrews come forth out of the holes wherein they were hid." Then, calling to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, they bade them approach, and they would punish them for their rashness. Jonathan took these words as a sign that the Lord had delivered the enemy into his hands, and, followed by his comrade, crept on his hands and feet with great labour and difficulty till he arrived at a certain rock which, owing to its natural strength, had been left unguarded. This they succeeded in climbing; and falling suddenly upon a group of Philistines, they slew about twenty men, while the rest, imagining that all the army of Israel had got into their camp, became so panic-stricken that, in the confusion which followed, they struck down one another. To increase their alarm the earth quaked; and those who had gone out to plunder, hearing of the disaster, which had been greatly magnified by report, and terrified by the unusual motion of the earth, recognised that the God of Israel was fighting against them, and fled in the wildest confusion. To add to the tumult, many of the Hebrews who had concealed themselves in caves, and had sought shelter among the rocks, now came forth and joined in the pursuit.

Saul's rash vow.

Those who had been stationed to observe the enemy's motions, and to give notice of them to Saul, came to him with the astounding news that the camp of the Philistines was in confusion, and that men were seen fleeing this way and that. The king immediately gave orders for inquiries to be made if anyone had left the camp, and only then was it discovered that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent. When at length Saul began to conjecture what had happened, he bade the High Priest bring the Ark, and consult the Lord whether their enterprise would be attended with success or

not. But at that moment a great uproar was heard proceeding from the Philistine camp, at the sound of which all the Israelites set up a mighty shout, and rushed forth to complete the victory thus miraculously brought about by God's blessing and the surpassing courage of Jonathan. That the pursuit might be kept up till nightfall, Saul in his ardour exclaimed: "Cursed be the man that shall eat food till evening, till I be revenged on my enemies." This rash vow, which so nearly proved fatal to Jonathan, was communicated to the army.

Jonathan's danger owing to Saul's vow.

Now it chanced that, in their endeavour to escape from the victorious Israelites, the Philistines fled into the forest, followed closely by Saul and his men. Although the place abounded with wild honey, and they were spent with extreme hunger and fatigue, yet, on account of the king's vow, every man refrained from eating, except one, and this Saul's own son Jonathan, who had not been made aware of the curse pronounced by his father against anyone who should disregard his prohibition. Faint and weary, Jonathan dipped the rod which he carried in his hand into a honeycomb, and raising it to his lips, thus refreshed himself; but hardly had he tasted when he was informed of Saul's vow, and became exceedingly troubled in spirit, complaining bitterly of his father's rash words.

Another effect of Saul's vow.

The pursuit was continued till evening as far as Aialon, in the tribe of Dan, where the famished Israelites fell upon the spoils they had taken, and slaying some of the sheep and oxen, they ate the flesh with the blood, which was contrary to the law. In this we see another bad effect of Saul's rash vow. When he heard what they had done, he reproved them; and setting up a large stone, commanded every one to bring there the ox or the ram which he wished to slay, and to refrain from sinning against God by eating the flesh

with the blood. He then erected an altar to the Lord, probably the very stone on which the oxen and sheep had just before been killed for the people.

Jonathan is saved by the people.

Wishing now to renew the pursuit, Saul called to him the High Priest, and enjoined him to consult the Lord as to whether they should still follow after the fleeing Philistines; but no answer was returned. Saul at once attributed the silence on the part of God to some hidden sin among his followers, and exclaimed that, if the transgression had been committed even by his own son Jonathan, he should surely die; at the same time he gave orders for the Israelites to remain together while he and Jonathan stood apart. Then addressing himself to God, he said: "O Lord God of Israel, give a sign by which we may know what the meaning is, that Thou answerest not Thy servant to-day: if this iniquity be in me, or in my son Jonathan, give a proof: or if it be in Thy people, give holiness." After Saul had thus prayed that God would distinguish the innocent from the guilty, lots were cast, and to the surprise of all, Saul and Jonathan were taken; and when they were cast a second time, the lot fell upon Jonathan. Entreated by his father to confess what he had done, Jonathan replied: "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod which was in my hand, and behold I must die." Saul replied that he certainly should die; and the sentence would have been carried out without delay had not the people themselves interfered, saying: "Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? This must not be: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath wrought with God this day." Thus was Jonathan saved by the people,* and Saul returned from his pursuit of the Philistines.

* Directed in all probability by the High Priest, who must first of all have pronounced the oath null and void.

CHAPTER LVI

WAR WITH THE AMALECITES—THE ANOINTING OF DAVID, B.C. 1070

Saul subdues many enemies.

THE battle of Machmas was but the forerunner of a series of victories. Saul's kingdom being now firmly established, he determined to turn his arms against all the enemies of Israel, and in succession defeated the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and the kings of Soba, besides inflicting further defeats on the Philistines. In these wars he was accompanied by his three sons, Jonathan, Jessui, and Melchisua and Abner, his cousin, who was a great warrior, was put in command of the army. In addition to the three sons named above, Saul had also two daughters, Merob and Michol, all children of his wife Achinoam.

The Amalecites to be destroyed.

After Saul had gained many victories over the surrounding nations that were hostile to the Israelites, he received a special command from God to undertake an expedition against the Amalecites, and to execute that vengeance which had long since been denounced against them for their treacherous conduct towards the Israelites on their coming out of the land of Egypt. The Divine message, spoken by the lips of Samuel, was conveyed in these words "I have reckoned up all that Amalec hath done to Israel how he opposed them in the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now, therefore, go and smite Amalec, and utterly destroy all that he hath: spare him not, nor covet anything that is his; but slay both man and woman child and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Saul lost no time in carrying out God's command, but immediately assembled a force of more than 200,000 men and marched against the doomed Amalecites. In the

Saul's disobedience.

meantime, the Cinites, who dwelt among the Amalecites, because they had shown kindness to the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, were secretly warned by Saul to depart while there was yet time, lest they too should fall amid the general destruction. Dividing his men into several parties, Saul arranged them in ambush by the river; then suddenly falling upon the enemy, he put them to rout, and pursued them as they fled from Havila as far as Sur, on the very borders of Egypt. All the common people he put to death; but Agag their king he took prisoner, and spared the best of the flocks and herds. Moreover, whatever was of value was saved, but everything that was vile and good for nothing was destroyed. To commemorate his victory, Saul erected a triumphal arch at Carmel, and then returned to Galgal.

God is angry with Saul.

Meanwhile the word of the Lord came to Samuel saying: "It repenteth Me that I have made Saul king; for he hath forsaken Me, and hath not executed My commandments." These words grieved the heart of the aged prophet. Throwing himself down, he spent the night in tears, and besought the Lord for Saul that He would forgive him, and not be angry with him; then rising up in the morning, he went forth to visit Saul, and arrived at Galgal when the latter was in the act of offering a holocaust out of the choicest spoils which he had taken from Amalec. When Saul beheld him, he exclaimed: "Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have fulfilled the word of the Lord." "What meaneth, then," said Samuel, "this bleating of the flocks which soundeth in my ears, and the lowing of the herds which I hear?" Saul answered: "They have brought them from Amalec; for the people spared the best of the sheep and herds, that they might be sacrificed to the Lord thy God, but the rest we have slain." Samuel said: "When

thou wast a little one in thy own eyes, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed thee to to be king over Israel. Why didst not thou hearken to the voice of the Lord?" Saul replied: "Yea, I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord, and have walked in the way by which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalec, and Amalec I have slain: but the people took of the spoils sheep and oxen, as the first-fruits of those things that were slain, to offer sacrifice to the Lord their God in Galgal." Samuel said to him: "Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey. For as much, therefore, as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king."

Touched with remorse, Saul confessed his fault, saying: "I have sinned, because I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words, fearing the people, and obeying their voice. But now bear, I beseech thee, my sin, and return with me, that I may adore the Lord." Samuel refused his request, and turned to go away; whereupon Saul, in his anxiety to retain him, clutched his mantle so tightly that it was rent. Samuel told him that so had the Lord rent the kingdom of Israel from him that day, and had given it to his neighbour, who was better than he.

Saul's rejection.

Saul, whose sorrow seemed to be actuated more by what his subjects might think and do against him, than by the displeasure which his sins had given to God, continued to beseech Samuel to return with him, and thus honour him before the ancients of the people and before Israel. To this, Samuel

Samuel parts from Saul.

at length consented; and waiting till Saul had worshipped, gave orders for Agag to be led forth. When he was brought before him, Samuel said to him: "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." He then took a sword and hewed him to pieces. After this, Samuel departed to Ramatha, mourning for Saul, whom he never again visited, while Saul returned to his residence at Gabaa.

amuel sent to oint David.

While Samuel was yet lamenting the fall of one whom he had so dearly loved and so much admired, God said to him: "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, whom I have rejected from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil, and come, that I may send thee to Isai, the Bethlehemite; for I have provided Me a king among his sons." Afraid lest, when Saul heard of his mission he might kill him, Samuel declared his fears to the Lord, who directed him to take a calf of the herd, and to offer a sacrifice, to which he was to invite Isai, or Jesse, the grandson of Booz and Ruth. At the same time He promised to make known to him what he was to do, and commanded him to anoint the one whom He should point out. Samuel obeyed; but when he came to Bethlehem, the ancients of the city wondered and asked: "Is thy coming hither peaceable?" "It is peaceable," he said: "I am come to offer sacrifice to the Lord, be ye sanctified, and come with me to the sacrifice." He then sanctified Isai and his sons, and invited them also to the sacrifice.

e sons of i.

Now Isai had eight sons, seven of whom accompanied their father, while the youngest, David (*beloved*), was absent tending the sheep. When Samuel saw Eliab, the eldest son, he said to himself as he regarded his tall and comely figure, "Truly the Lord's anointed is before me." But the Lord said to him: "Look not on his countenance, nor on the

height of his stature, because I have rejected him, nor do I judge according to the look of a man; for man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." Abinadab was next brought before the prophet, but was in like manner rejected. And when all the seven had passed before Samuel with the same result, he said to Isai "Are all thy sons here?" Isai answered that there was yet another, but he was young, and was at that time away in the fields looking after the flocks. Samuel said: "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither." A messenger was accordingly sent; and when David, a youth ruddy and beautiful to behold, stood before them, the voice of the Lord said to Samuel: "Arise, and anoint him, for this is he." In the midst of his brethren Samuel anointed him, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward. Samuel then returned to Ramatha.

Saul tormented by an evil spirit.

Meanwhile the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit troubled him, so that he became subject to fits of melancholy, anger, suspicion, and cruelty. Out of compassion for him, his officers advised him to seek a man skilful in playing on the harp, that when the fits came upon him his soul might be soothed by the calming effects of the musical strains. This advice was acted upon, and Saul asked them to find such a man, and to bring him to him. "Behold," said one of the officers, "I have seen a son of Isai, the Bethlehemite, a skilful player, a man of great strength and fit for war, comely in person and prudent in his words, and the Lord is with him." David —for he was the man—was then sent for, and Saul was so pleased with him that he not only appointed him to play before him, but at the same time chose him to be his armour-bearer. Whenever the evil spirit was upon the king, David took his harp and played, whereupon Saul

feelings were calmed, and the evil spirit departed from him. Now that David had succeeded in restoring tranquillity to the king, and there appeared no further need for his attendance, he returned to Bethlehem, and resumed the care of his father's flocks.

CHAPTER LVII

DAVID AND GOLIATH

The Philistines at Socho, in Juda.

THE Philistines gave the Israelites no rest; but collecting an army at Socho, in Juda, they encamped between that place and Azeca. Saul drew out his army to oppose them, and on rising ground overlooking the valley of Terebinth arranged his men in battle array, while the Philistines took up a position on another hill over against them. Thus, with but a narrow valley to separate them, the two armies stood opposed.

Goliath.

Now in the Philistine army was a base-born man of gigantic stature, named Goliath, whose height was six cubits and a span ($9\frac{3}{4}$ feet). On his head he wore a helmet of brass, while his coat of mail, which was also of brass, weighed 5,000 sicles (156 pounds). He had greaves of brass on his legs, a buckler of brass covered his shoulders, and in his hand he wielded a spear the staff of which was like a weaver's beam, while the head, which was of iron, weighed 600 sicles (19 pounds).

The giant's challenge.

Day after day, for forty days, this monster came forth, and standing boldly before the Israelites, thus defied them: "Why are you come out prepared to fight? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose out a man from among you, and let him come down and fight hand to hand. If he be able to fight with me, and kill me, we will

be servants to you; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, you shall be servants and shall serve us." But Saul and all the Israelites, on hearing the challenge and beholding the mighty giant, were dismayed and greatly terrified, and no man dared venture to give him battle.

David in the Israelite camp.

At this time three of the sons of Isai were serving in Saul's army, and David was sent by his father to see how it fared with them, and to carry provisions to them. Leaving the charge of the flocks to the keeper, he departed without delay to do his father's bidding, and arrived in camp at the very time when Goliath, as usual, appeared before the army of Israel with his boastful challenge. His brave soul was fired when he heard the taunting words of the giant; and being told that the king had offered, not only great riches, but even his daughter in marriage to the one who should deliver the Israelites from this humiliation, he himself resolved to go out against the insulting Philistine, and this, not with the hope of reward, but that he might take away the reproach from Israel. When he made known his resolve, he was rebuked for his presumption by his brother Eliab, who told him that he had better return to his flocks, and not waste time in idle words. In spite, however, of his brother's reproaches, his purpose still remained unshaken.

David goes out to meet Goliath.

At length it came to the ears of the king that a youth had been found willing to do battle against Goliath; whereupon Saul sent a messenger to David, to bid him lose no time in appearing before him. When Saul saw him, he was struck no less with his youthful appearance than with the confident tone in which he addressed him. "Let not any man's heart be dismayed in him," he said. "I, thy servant, will go, and will fight against the Philistine." Saul rejoined: "Thou art not able to withstand this Philistine, nor to fight against him, for thou art but a boy;

but he is a warrior from his youth." To this, David replied that he had already slain a lion and a bear that had come to devour his flocks; and surely the Lord, who had delivered him out of the paw of the lion and from the clutches of the bear, would also save him from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine who had dared to curse the army of the living God. Saul opposed his wishes no longer; but having clothed him with his own garments, and having put on his head a helmet of brass, and arrayed him in a coat of mail, he bade him go in the name of the Lord. David then girded on his sword, and began to try if he could walk in armour, for he was unaccustomed to it. Finding himself encumbered and his motions impeded, he said to the king: "I cannot go thus, for I am not used to it." Then casting off the coat of mail, and taking the staff which he always carried with him, he went down to the brook, where he picked up five smooth stones. These he put into his shepherd's scrip, and taking a sling in his hand, went forth armed in this simple manner to meet the dreaded giant.

oliath despises avid.

Goliath came, as was his wont, preceded by his armour-bearer, to repeat his defiance; and when he beheld David, who told him that he had come to accept the challenge, he despised the youth, and casting down upon him a look of scorn, said: "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with a staff?" He then cursed him in the name of the gods of the Philistines, and added: "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air, and to the beasts of the earth." To these words of contempt and disdain David replied: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied this day; and the Lord will deliver thee into my hand, and having slain thee, I will take away thy head from thee. The

carcasses of the army of the Philistines I will give this day to the birds of the air, and to the beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel; and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for it is His battle."

Goliath is slain.

The patience of the Philistine could hold out no longer; and burning with indignation, he advanced to smite down the youth. David, however, was on the alert. Quickly stepping back a few paces, he fitted a stone in his sling; then, whirling the sling round his head, with unerring aim he let fly the stone, which struck the monster full in the forehead, and felled him to the ground. Stunned and bleeding, Goliath was unable to rise; while David, to complete his victory, ran up, and quickly drawing the Philistine's own sword from its sheath, cut off the boaster's head.

Flight of the Philistines.

Seeing what David had done, all the men of Israel uttered a mighty shout, and rushed forward to attack the dismayed Philistines; but they terrified by the overthrow of their champion did not wait for them to come up, but fled in the wildest confusion, pursued by their elated foe. Great was the slaughter. As far as the gates of Accaron their path was marked by multitudes of dead and dying, and not till the day was well advanced did the Israelites return to take possession of the Philistine camp. As his share of the spoil, David took the head of Goliath, which he carried to Jerusalem, and the armour, which he put in his own tent.

Saul sends for David.

Saul, who does not seem to have recognised in David the youth who had charmed away his melancholy by playing before him on the harp, sent for his general Abner, and inquired of him if he knew who the young man was. Abner was equally ignorant, and said to Saul: "As thy soul liveth, O king I know not." When the battle was over, the king sent

for David, and from his own lips received the account of his simple shepherd's life, and at the same time learnt that he was the son of Isai, the Bethlehemite.

he friendship David and nathan.

It chanced that Jonathan was present during this interview; and as he listened to the artless story of David, he conceived so great an affection for him that he made a covenant of friendship with him, for he loved him as his own soul. Moreover, as the king had now resolved on retaining David in his service, Jonathan, to honour his friend, stripped himself of his own garments and clothed him therewith, bestowing upon him at the same time his sword, his spear, and his girdle. David was not puffed up by the honours thus conferred upon him, but behaved himself with all prudence; and although the king set him over his soldiers, he conducted himself with such wisdom and moderation that, far from stirring up feelings of jealousy, he made himself acceptable to all men, but especially to Saul's servants.

ul's envy of avid.

Such undisturbed happiness, however, was destined to last but a short time; for when the conquering Israelites returned from the war with the Philistines, the women came out of the cities with timbrels in their hands, dancing and singing to greet them. Loud was their song of triumph—"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." At the sound of these words, Saul's heart was stirred with anger, and hearing David thus preferred before him, said indignantly to those around him: "They have given David ten thousand, and to me they have given but one thousand, what can he have more but the kingdom?" From that day forward Saul regarded David with an evil eye, and feelings of deadly hatred rankled in his bosom.

CHAPTER LVIII

SAUL ATTEMPTS THE LIFE OF DAVID—JONATHAN'S DEVOTION

Saul tries to kill David.

On the very next day after Saul's triumphant return from his victory over the Philistines, the evil spirit again came upon him, and David was brought in to soothe him by playing upon the harp. Seized with a sudden fit of rage as he regarded him, Saul hurled his spear with tremendous force, thinking to nail him to the wall; but David had his eyes fixed upon the king, and observing the sudden motion, quickly stepped aside. By doing so he avoided the intended blow, and at once fled from the king's presence. On another occasion Saul sought his life in the same manner, and again he escaped as before. After this Saul feared David, for he knew that the Lord was with him, and had departed from himself. He now sought to bring about his destruction in a more cunning manner, by giving him an honourable but dangerous office to fulfil, from which it seemed impossible that he should return in safety.

David marries Michol.

Calling David to him, he offered to carry out his promise to him as the victor over Goliath, by giving him his daughter Merob in marriage, but imposed a further condition, which he hoped would prove fatal to him. "Behold my elder daughter Merob," he said, "her will I give thee to wife; only be a valiant man, and fight the battles of the Lord." At the same time he added within himself: "Let not *my* hand, but the hands of the *Philistines* be upon him." David replied: "Who am I, or what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law of the king?" Saul refused to be turned from his purpose, and demanded of David as a dowry the spoils of a hundred Philistines.

David accepted the condition; and setting out with the men under his command, attacked and defeated the Philistine army, and with his own hand succeeded in slaying 200 of the enemy. The tokens of his victory he laid at Saul's feet, and claimed the promised reward. In the meantime Saul, whose only thought was that David would be slain, had given Merob in marriage to another, and now offered his younger daughter Michol in her stead. David, who loved Michol and had his affection returned, consented to the marriage, and thus became the king's son-in-law. Saul's enmity soon became so intense that he was no longer able to conceal his bitter hatred for David, and even went so far as to ask Jonathan and his servants to co-operate with him in compassing his death.

Jonathan pleads his friend.

Although Saul might naturally have expected Jonathan to be interested in the death of David, whom he might fear as a competitor for the throne, still was he a stranger to the generous sentiments of his son, or he would never have made such a proposal. So far was Jonathan from being shaken in his affections, that his love for his friend grew in proportion as the dangers which threatened him increased. Having waited for a convenient time to speak to him unobserved, he said: "Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: wherefore look to thyself, I beseech thee. In the morning thou shalt lie hid in a secret place, and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art; and I will speak of thee to my father, and whatsoever I shall see I will tell thee." Next morning Jonathan walked with Saul in the neighbourhood of David's hiding-place, and as they went along together, he said to him: "Sin not, O king, against thy servant David, because he hath not sinned against thee, and his works are very good towards thee. He put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought great salvation for all Israel. Thou sawest it and

didst rejoice. Why therefore wilt thou sin against innocent blood by killing David who is without fault?" Saul was appeased by these words and swore: "As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain." On hearing these words, Jonathan's heart was filled with joy, and as soon as an opportunity offered, he hastened off to carry the happy tidings to his friend, and to conduct him back again to Saul, who once more received him into his favour.

This reconciliation was not lasting. Soon the Israelites were again at war with the Philistines, and David's success against them once more roused the jealousy of the king. To quell the paroxysms of fury which burned within him, David was again playing before him on the harp, when the king, in an uncontrollable fit of passion, hurled his spear at him. David turned quickly aside and fled, while the erring spear was fixed quivering in the wall. To cut off all chance of escape, Saul now sent soldiers to watch David's house, with instructions that they were to kill him as he came out in the morning. But in the early morning, Michol, David's wife, observed the guards; and surmising their intention, instantly roused her husband and urged him to escape while there was yet time. Not a moment was to be lost. She let him down from the window by a rope; then quickly taking a goat's skin, she dressed up an image which she arranged in the bed to resemble a man sleeping. No sooner had she done this than a loud knocking was heard at the door, and on going to inquire what was wanted, she was accosted by an officer who in the king's name demanded the surrender of David. Michol pretended the greatest alarm for her husband, who she said was indisposed and unable to rise, and pointed in proof of her words to the bed, where indeed lay the supposed David.

David's house surrounded by Saul's servants.

A messenger was immediately sent to the king for further

instructions, but Saul, whose impatience would brook no delay, commanded David to be brought to him at once, even though he had to be carried on the bed. As soon as this message was received, the soldiers entered the bedchamber; but on approaching the bed, they beheld not David, but the hairy substitute. The king's anger knew no bounds when he heard of the deception, and calling Michol to him he sternly asked her why she had, by her own act, allowed his enemy to escape out of his grasp. Michol begged her father not to be angry with her, seeing that she had been compelled to act thus to save her own life, because David had threatened to kill her unless she contrived his escape. Saul forgave his daughter; and David having escaped to Ramatha came to Samuel, and told him all that Saul had done to him. On hearing of the king's cruel resentment, Samuel removed from Ramatha, and accompanied by David went to Najoth, where they dwelt together.

avid's escape.

Intelligence of David's retreat came to the ears of Saul, and messengers were instantly despatched to seize him and bring him back; but when they saw a company of prophets prophesying—that is, singing praises to God by a Divine impulse—and Samuel presiding over them, the Spirit of God having come upon them they too began to prophesy. When word of this was brought to Saul, he sent others, who, experiencing the like impulse, also prophesied. A third party was sent, but with a similar result. At last Saul, in a transport of rage, resolved to go in person; but no sooner was he come to the well of Socho, than feeling himself moved by the same supernatural influence, he commenced prophesying, and continued to do so all the way to Najoth. There, laying aside his royal apparel, he cast himself down upon the ground before Samuel, prophesying all that day and night: hence the proverb: "What! is Saul too among the prophets?"

ul and his ssengers phesy.

Thinking it no longer safe to remain at Najoth, David secretly fled to Jonathan at Gabaa, and in the ears of his friend poured out the bitterness of his sorrows: "What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin against thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Jonathan said to him: "God forbid, thou shalt not die; for my father will do nothing, great or little, without first telling me: hath, then, my father hid this word only from me? No, this shall not be." David answered: "Truly as the Lord liveth, there is but one step between me and death."

David's sorrows.

On receiving Jonathan's promise to do whatever he should suggest, David said: "Behold tomorrow is the new moon, and I, according to custom, am wont to sit beside the king to eat: let me go, then, that I may be hid in the field till the evening of the third day. If thy father look and inquire for me, tell him that I asked leave to go to Bethlehem, where there are solemn sacrifices for all my tribe. If he shall say: 'It is well,' thy servant shall have peace; but if he be angry, know that his malice is come to its height. Deal mercifully, then, with thy servant, for thou hast brought me into a covenant of the Lord with thee.' Jonathan replied: "If I should certainly know that evil is determined by my father against thee, I could not do otherwise than tell thee." On David's asking who was to be the messenger of Saul's disposition towards him Jonathan invited him into the field, and as they went along together, said to him: "If my father shall continue in malice against thee, I will discover it to thee, and will send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace, and the Lord be with thee, as He hath been with my father. And if I live, thou shalt show me the kindness of the Lord: but if I die, thou shalt not take away thy kindness from my house for ever, when the Lord shall have rooted out the

How David is to know Saul's disposition towards him.

enemies of David, every one of them from the earth." They then solemnly renewed the covenant of friendship which they had formerly made, and agreed upon this signal by which to know the mind of the king. "On the third day," said Jonathan, "thou shalt remain beside the stone which is called Ezel, and I will shoot three arrows near it, and will shoot as if I were exercising myself at a mark. If I shall say to my attendant: 'Fetch me the arrows: behold they are on this side of thee, take them up'; then shalt thou come to me, because there is peace to thee. But if I shall speak thus to the boy: 'Behold the arrows are beyond thee': Go in peace, for the Lord hath sent thee away."

ul's anger ainst nathan.

The feast of the new moon being come, David, instead of appearing in his place at the king's table, hid himself in the field, as arranged. On the right of the king sat Jonathan, while on the left sat Abner, the captain of his host; but David's seat was empty. Saul made no remark, as he believed David's absence was owing to some ceremonial uncleanness; but when on the following day his place again appeared empty, the king, turning to Jonathan asked: "Why cometh not the son of Isai to meat yesterday or to-day?" Jonathan tried to make excuses for his friend, but only succeeded in turning his father's wrath against himself. "Do I not know," he said, "that thou lovest the son of Isai to thy own confusion? For as long as he liveth upon the earth, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Therefore now presently send, and fetch him to me; for he is the son of death." Jonathan answered: "Why shall he die, and what hath he done?" But Saul only became the more enraged; and snatching up a spear, would have struck his son had he not been restrained in his rash act. Jonathan was grieved both on account of the affront and the danger to which he himself had been

publicly exposed, as well as on account of his friend, upon whose destruction he perceived that his father was now bent, and that deliberately, and not merely during his fits of madness. He therefore rose up hastily from the table in fierce anger and left the room.

The parting of Jonathan and David.

Early next morning he went out into the field in which David was hid, as if for the sake of exercising himself with the bow and arrow, but in reality to inform his friend of Saul's disposition towards him. David listened anxiously to catch Jonathan's words; but when he heard him call out to the boy, "Behold the arrow is further beyond thee," he knew that he must fly for safety, though he knew not whither. Waiting till Jonathan had dismissed his attendant, he issued from his hiding-place, and fell down in tears at Jonathan's feet. Then rising up, he embraced his friend; and kissing one another, they wept together, but David the more bitterly. As he was leaving wife, friends, and all, Jonathan strove to comfort him, and when the moment came that they must part, he said to him: "Go in peace; and let all stand that we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord." David then went away, and Jonathan returned into the city.

CHAPTER LIX

DAVID'S FLIGHT—SAUL'S MASSACRE OF THE PRIESTS

David receives the sacred loaves of Proposition.

David, now a lonely exile, betook himself first of all to Nobe, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, to which the Tabernacle of the Lord had been transported from Silo, and went to the High Priest Achimelech. When the High Priest saw him coming alone, with neither friend nor servant to accompany him, he expressed surprise that a man of David's rank should travel thus, and inquired the cause.

David removed all suspicion by pretending that he was on a mission from the king which demanded both expedition and secrecy, and that he was at the moment without retinue, as he had instructed his servants to meet him at a certain place. He told him, moreover, that he had come without provisions of any kind, and besought the High Priest to supply him with food, of which he was sore in need. Achimelech answered that he had nothing but the sacred loaves of Proposition, which had been taken away from the Tabernacle to be replaced by fresh ones; yet, owing to the pressing necessity of the case, although none but priests were allowed to eat of these, he gave him of the hallowed bread, after assuring himself that he was defiled by no uncleanness. When David had appeased his hunger, he inquired of Achimelech whether he had any weapons, because he had come without sword or spear. The High Priest answered that he had not, but that the sword with which David had slain Goliath was kept in the Tabernacle behind the ephod. This David gladly accepted, and having taken leave of Achimelech, he fled out of the country of the Hebrews into the land of the Philistines.

oeg the yrian.

But David's visit to the High Priest had not passed altogether unobserved by his enemies. It chanced that a certain Doeg, a Syrian by birth, and one of Saul's servants, was present at this time in Nobe, and saw and heard all that passed between Achimelech and David.

avid feigns to mad.

The first place to which David repaired after leaving Nobe, was the city of Geth, in which Achis, king of Geth, had his residence, and from which the giant Goliath had gone forth to battle against the Israelites. This bold step served to throw dust in the eyes of David's pursuers, who would never suspect that he would take refuge with a people

whose champion he had slain, and whose armies he had routed. David hoped to pass without being recognised, but his hopes were in vain. Soon after his arrival, the servants of Achis began to have their suspicions, and said to the king: "Is not this David of whom it was sung: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?" Rumours of these sayings came to the ears of David, and he was filled with alarm. Realising his danger, he feigned madness, stumbling against the doors, and foaming at the mouth, so that the spittle ran down upon his beard; and when the servants of Achis again appeared before their master with the self-same story, he was angry with them, and exclaimed: "You saw the man was mad: why have you brought him to me? Have we need of madmen that you have brought this fellow into my presence?" Achis then permitted him to depart unmolested.

The cave of Odollam.

From Geth, David came to the tribe of Juda, and abode in a cave by the city of Odollam. When his friends heard of his whereabouts, he was there joined by his brethren and all his father's house, besides a goodly number of persons oppressed with debt, and many others who were in distress from various causes: in all about 400.

Not considering his retreat sufficiently secure for his parents, he hastily crossed the Jordan, and presenting himself before the king of the Moabites, who was friendly towards him, made this request: "Let my father and mother tarry with thee, I beseech thee, till I know what God will do for me." This favour the king readily granted.

Doeg betrays the High Priest to Saul.

Warned by the prophet Gad, David fled with his followers into the forest of Haret, in the land of Juda, a little to the west of Jerusalem. Word having been brought to Saul that

David had been seen with a multitude of followers, he began to feel concerned for the fidelity of his own servants, and openly accused them of conspiring against him, and of paying heed to the counsels of Jonathan, who had himself entered into a league with the son of Isai. He reproached them, moreover, with being too little concerned about his interests, and complained that there was no one faithful enough to keep him warned of the treachery with which he was surrounded. At this juncture Doeg, the Syrian, came forward, and said to the king: "I saw the son of Isai in Nobe, with Achimelech the High Priest, who consulted the Lord for him, and gave him food to eat, after which he sent him away armed with the sword of Goliath the Philistine." On hearing this, Saul was filled with rage, and commanded the High Priest to be brought before him.

The slaughter of the priests.

When Achimelech came, he was accused of treason in having conspired with Saul's enemies, and in having assisted in the escape of one whom he knew to be the king's most deadly foe and an outlaw. In vain did Achimelech protest his innocence, alleging that in what he had done, he had acted not with any intention of dishonouring the king, but rather of showing his respect by affording help to one whom he regarded, not merely as a most faithful servant, but as the son-in-law of his sovereign. Without heeding these words, Saul exclaimed: "Dying thou shalt die, Achimelech; thou and all thy father's house." Then addressing his servants, he continued: "Turn, and kill the priests of the Lord, for their hand is with David: they knew that he was fled, and they told it not to me." But no one moved to do his bidding, nor was a hand raised against the priests. The king in anger cast his eyes around, and seeing the Syrian, Doeg, he bade him take his sword and fall upon the priests.

Doeg obeyed; and on that one day were slain eighty-five priests, each wearing the linen ephod.

The inhabitants of Nobe slain.

Saul now sent to Nobe, the city of the priests, where he put to the sword, not only men and women, but even helpless children, and the city itself he doomed to destruction. Thus was the posterity of Heli almost entirely cut off, as God had threatened. One only of the sons of Achimelech, named Abiathar, escaped the cruel massacre, and he, having fled to David, recounted to him the sad calamity that had overtaken his father and his father's house. David was overwhelmed with sorrow, and bitterly did he blame himself for having been the cause of so terrible a misfortune. He, however, encouraged Abiathar, and said: "Fear not: for he that seeketh thy life seeketh my life also, and with me thou shalt be saved." God was thus pleased to save Abiathar, the successor to the High-Priesthood; and when David wished to consult the Lord, he did so either through the prophet Gad, who also was in his camp, or through Abiathar, who had brought with him from Nobe the sacred ephod of the High Priest.

David surprises the Philistines at Ceila.

While David was in the forest of Haret, word was brought to him that the people of Ceila, after they had gathered in their corn, had been suddenly attacked by the Philistines, who were plundering their barns and carrying off their produce. He at once consulted the Lord as to what was best to be done, and received the encouraging reply: "Go, and thou shalt smite the Philistines, and shalt save Ceila." David made known his intention to his followers, who expressed alarm at the thought of entering upon an undertaking so bold, and so fraught with danger to their little band. To encourage them, and to convince them that the Lord was with them, he sought the Divine sanction a second time, and again

received as answer: "Arise, and go to Ceila, for I will deliver the Philistines into thy hand." Nothing more was wanting to remove their fears; and, marching quickly in the direction of Ceila, they came suddenly upon the unsuspecting Philistines, utterly defeated them, and carried off their plunder, besides a large number of cattle. David then withdrew his followers into the town of Ceila, where they established themselves.

Saul, who had been apprised of David's retreat, thought the opportunity had now certainly come for capturing him, and resolved to avail himself of it. Presumptuously supposing that God was on his side, even after his repeated crimes, he exclaimed: "The Lord hath delivered him into my hands, and he is shut up, being come into a city that hath gates and bars."

avid's last terview with nathan.

When rumour of Saul's intention reached David, he asked Abiathar to consult God in his regard, and received the astounding reply that it was the intention of the people of Ceila, whom he had so recently saved from the depredations of the Philistines, to deliver him up into the hands of the king. Grieved at the thought of such base ingratitude, he could do nothing but retire with all possible speed, if he wished to escape his relentless pursuers; therefore, gathering together his followers, who now numbered some 600 men, he left the town and wandered from one spot to another, uncertain where to stay. For some time he abode in the desert fastnesses, and at length came to a wooded hill situated in the desert of Ziph. It was here that he held his last interview with Jonathan. At this secret meeting, which was necessarily but too short, the two once again renewed their covenant of friendship, and, before parting, Jonathan spoke these words of encouragement to David: "Fear not; for the hand of my father Saul shall not find thee: thou shalt reign over

Israel, and I shall be next to thee; yea, and my father knoweth this." Then, having taken an affectionate farewell of his friend, he returned home.

Saul in pursuit of David.

The Ziphites, learning that David was in their neighbourhood, sent messengers to Saul to say that, if he would come without delay, they would deliver up his enemy into his hands. On hearing this, Saul was greatly rejoiced, and said: "Blessed be ye of the Lord, for you have pitied my case. Go, therefore, I pray you, and use all diligence, and when you have found out his lurking holes wherein he is hid, return to me with certain information that I may go with you. And if he should even go down into the earth to hide himself, I will search him out." When David found that his hiding-place had been betrayed, he fled from the wood on Mount Hachila, and came into the wilderness of Maon, closely pursued by Saul. So hot did the chase become that at one time David was on one side of a hill while Saul was hunting for him on the other; from which circumstance the hill received the name of the *Rock of Division*. But just when Saul was on the point of having his hopes realised, word came to him that the Philistines had made an incursion into the land of the Hebrews; and thus, to repel the invaders, he was forced to desist from the pursuit at once.

CHAPTER LX

THE CAVE OF ENGADDI—DEATH OF SAMUEL—NABAL

Saul in David's power.

David next withdrew into the district of Engaddi, famous for its rocks and caverns, and situated on the western shore of the Dead Sea, below Jericho. Saul was kept advised of his movements; and when he had succeeded in driving back the invading

Philistines, he gathered around him 3,000 picked men, and again set out in pursuit. Among almost inaccessible rocks, inhabited only by the wild goats of the desert, David was chased with the most untiring energy. On one occasion, so near to each other were the pursuers and the pursued, that Saul, unarmed and unconscious of danger, left his attendants at a distance, and actually entered the very cave in the dark recesses of which David and his men had taken refuge. Now had the favourable opportunity arrived. Rejoiced at seeing the king within their grasp, David's followers whispered in their master's ear: "Behold the day of which the Lord said to thee: 'I will deliver thy enemy unto thee, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good in thy eyes.'" But David's thoughts were not on revenge. Rising gently, and screened by the gloom of the cavern, he crept noiselessly behind the king, and merely cut a piece out of the hem of his robe. Even for this small mark of disrespect to the Lord's anointed his heart smote him, and he was touched with sorrow. Carefully retracing his steps, he checked the ardour of his men, who stood waiting for the signal to pounce upon the king, and in words scarcely audible thus addressed them: "The Lord be merciful unto me that I may do no such thing to my master as to lay my hand upon him, for he is the Lord's anointed."

David spares Saul's life.

Still without suspicion of danger, Saul now withdrew from the cave, followed closely by David; but when he had got a short distance away, David cried out: "My lord the king!" Saul turned immediately and beheld David, who bowed down before him, and showed him the piece that he had cut out of his garment, as a proof of his having spared his life. David then addressed him in the most touching terms. "Why dost thou hear the words of men," he said, "who tell thee that David seeketh to hurt thee? Behold this day thy

eyes have seen that the Lord hath delivered thee into my hand in the cave, and, though I had a thought to kill thee, I spared thee. I was unwilling to hurt my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, see and know, O my father, the hem of thy robe in my hand, that when I cut it off I would not put out my hand against thee. Reflect and see that I entertain no evil, neither have I sinned against thee: but thou liest in wait for my life to take it away. The Lord judge between me and thee, but my hand shall not be upon thee." Saul's heart relented, and, being greatly affected, he wept and said: "Is this thy voice, my son David? Thou art more just than I; for I have rewarded thy goodness with evil. For who, when he hath found his enemy, will let him go well away? But the Lord reward thee for what thou hast done to me this day. And now as I know that thou shalt surely be king of Israel, swear to me that thou wilt not destroy my seed after me, nor take away my name from my father's house." David complied with his request, and Saul returned home, but David remained for a time in his rocky shelter.

Samuel's death, B.C. 1057.

It was about this time that Samuel died, probably B.C. 1057, in the 98th year of his age. He was buried at his house in Ramatha, and Israel mourned for him as they had mourned for Moses and Aaron. In *Ecclesiasticus* he is spoken of as "the prophet of the Lord, the beloved of the Lord his God, who established a new government, and anointed princes over His people. . . . And he was known to be faithful in his words, because he saw the God of light" (Ecclus. xlvi. 16 and 18).

Nabal.

After the death of Samuel, David removed, and went down into the wilderness of Pharan. At this time there dwelt in the neighbouring wilderness of Maon a certain rich man named Nabal, of the house

of Caleb, who possessed large flocks of sheep and goats, which he pastured on the slopes of Carmel. Now David had charged his followers to abstain from injuring Nabal's flocks, and not only did they not rob them themselves, but they were to them as a wall of defence, both by day and by night, against all intruders. When the time of sheep-shearing came round, which was always made the occasion of much feasting and merry-making, David sent ten young men to salute him in terms of peace and friendship, and to request that he would make them a present of whatever he was able to give them, in return for the services they had rendered him.

Nabal scorns David's request.

Nabal, who was churlish and ill-natured, flatly refused the just request in the most insulting terms. "Who is David?" he said, "and what is the son of Isai? Servants are multiplied nowadays that flee from their masters. Shall I then take my bread, and the flesh of my cattle which I have killed for my shearers, and give to men whom I know not, nor whence they are?" When this reply was conveyed to David, he was filled with anger at finding his claim thus treated with contempt, and prepared to avenge the insolence of Nabal forthwith. Calling together his followers, he bade every man gird on his sword; then leaving 200 men to guard the baggage, he went forward with the remaining 400, fully resolved on the destruction of Nabal and all his household.

David is appeased by Abigail.

Meantime Abigail, Nabal's wife, a prudent and very comely woman, being informed of her husband's conduct, and learning too that David was approaching, made haste to go out to meet and appease him. Unknown to her husband, she got together 200 loaves, two vessels of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, besides clusters of raisins and cakes of dried figs, which she placed upon asses, and sent

forward with her servants, while she herself went to meet David. As soon as she saw him, she alighted from her ass, and bowing down, entreated him not to bear in mind the words of Nabal (*folly*), who according to his name was a fool, and folly was with him. As for herself, she had not seen the messengers whom he had sent, and knew nothing of his request until it was told to her by one of her servants. "Forgive me, therefore," she said, "and when the Lord shall have done to thee all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have made thee prince over Israel, this shall not be an occasion of grief, and a scruple of heart to thee that thou hast shed innocent blood, or hast revenged thyself." David said to her: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech: and blessed be thou who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand." He then gladly accepted her presents, and bade her return in peace to her house.

David marries Abigail.

When she returned home that evening, she found her husband feasting like a king, and overcome with wine; so that she told him nothing of what had happened till next day. In the morning, when he was sober, and heard to what imminent peril his avaricious conduct had exposed him, he became as one stupefied by the sudden shock, and his heart seemed to die within him. After lying in this miserable condition for ten days, he died, unpitied and unwept. Some time afterwards, when David heard of Nabal's death, he sent messengers to Abigail with the request that she would become his wife. This proposal she at first hesitated to accept, alleging her unworthiness; but as David continued to press his suit she finally consented, and set out to join him, accompanied by the messengers, and attended by five damsels whom she took with her as her waiting-maids.

Also about this time David married Achinoam of Jezrahel, a city of Juda, Michol, his first wife, having in the meantime been given in marriage by Saul to Phalti, the son of Lais; but when he came to the throne, he took her back again.

Here it may be useful to remark that, although David had *sworn* to destroy Nabal and his family, yet did he bless God that he had been prevented from shedding blood—a fact which clearly shows that the Israelites did not regard as binding an oath which involved the doing of anything in itself unlawful.

CHAPTER LXI

DAVID AGAIN SPARES SAUL — HIS FLIGHT TO THE PHILISTINES

avid in Saul's nt.

Saul's reconciliation with David was not lasting, and soon did he forget the friendly words that he had addressed to him at their last parting. Hearing from the Ziphites that David had again made his appearance among them, and had returned to his old hiding-place on the hill of Hachila, he resolved to go in pursuit. With 3,000 picked men he again marched out, and encamped in the neighbourhood of Hachila, not far from the spot where David himself lay concealed. But David, by means of spies, was not only kept informed of the king's disposition towards him, but of his every movement, and determined on a most daring plan. Without a word to his men, he set out in the dead of night with but one attendant, his nephew Abisai, and protected by the darkness, succeeded in penetrating into Saul's camp. Advancing stealthily step by step, they came at length to the tent in which the king lay asleep, with his spear fixed in the ground near

his head, and Abner and his officers, also asleep, lying round about him in a circle. Whispering into David's ear, Abisai said: "God hath shut up thy enemy this day in thy hands: now, then, I will run him through with my spear at once, and there shall be no need of a second time." David answered: "Kill him not; for who shall put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and shall be guiltless? But now take the spear which is at his head, and the cup of water, and let us go." This was done; and after they had retired to a safe distance on the hill overlooking the camp, David shouted in a loud voice: "Abner, wilt thou not answer?" Abner replied: "Who art thou that criest, and disturbest the king?" David called out: "Art not thou a man, Abner, and who is like unto thee in Israel? Why, then, hast thou not kept thy lord the king, for there came one of the people in to kill him? This thing is not good that thou hast done. And now where is the king's spear, where the cup of water that was at his head?"

Saul's life spared a second time.

Roused from his slumbers, Saul recognised David's voice, and was touched with remorse when he called to mind that even now, this second time, David had generously spared him when his life was in his hands. He called to David: "Is this thy voice, my son?" David answered: "It is my voice, my lord. Wherefore doth my lord persecute his servant? What evil have I done that the king of Israel is come out in pursuit of one so insignificant, as the partridge is hunted in the mountains? If the Lord stir thee up against me, let Him accept the sacrifice; but if the sons of men, they are cursed in the sight of the Lord, who have cast me out this day." Saul replied: "I have sinned: return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my life hath been precious in thy eyes this day; for it appeareth that I have done foolishly, and

have been ignorant in very many things." David asked that a servant might be sent to fetch away the spear, and added that the Lord would reward everyone according to his justice and his faithfulness: and that as he had that day spared the king's life, so might the Lord spare his life, and deliver him from all his distress. These, the last words addressed by David to Saul, seem to have made a deep impression upon the king; and before they parted he called down a blessing on David, saying: "Blessed art thou, my son David; and truly doing thou shalt do, and prevailing thou shalt prevail."

David goes to the Philistines.

But as no dependence could be placed on Saul's most solemn promises, David resolved to retire into the country of Geth, while Saul returned to Gabaa. Accordingly David, with his whole household and his 600 followers, again sought refuge in the land of the Philistines, and was this time most favourably received by Achis, king of Geth, who assigned for his abode the frontier city of Siceleg, which from that time remained in the possession of the kings of Juda. Achis, moreover, was convinced that by granting him protection he would greatly annoy Saul, and draw many brave men out of his dominions.

David at Siceleg.

During the time that David stayed among the Philistines, which in all amounted probably to sixteen months—viz., four months at Geth and a year at Siceleg—he attacked the Gessuri, the Gerzi, and the Amalecites, enemies of the people of God dwelling to the south of Juda; and stretching towards the borders of Egypt. That no one might be able to convey to Achis tidings of what he had done, he put to the sword every man and woman of each settlement that he attacked; their land he laid waste; and having carried off their beasts and camels, he came back laden with spoil. To the inquiry of Achis whence

he had taken so much plunder, David's answer, though ambiguous, was nevertheless true. He told the king that he had gone out against the south of Juda, words which might signify that he had attacked the Hebrews dwelling to the south, as Achis understood, or that he had made inroads upon those who dwelt to the south of them, which was really the case. Then Achis, believing that David had inflicted much injury on the Israelites, was pleased, and thought that, as he had forfeited all pretensions to dwell among his own people, much less to reign over them, he would thus be able to keep him always in his service.

Great gathering of Philistines against Israel.

It was about this time that the Philistines resolved on a mighty attack against the Israelites, and for this purpose each of the five great chiefs was called upon to assemble his forces and join the camp at Sunam. Achis, who had the greatest confidence in David, told him of the proposed expedition, and requested that he and his 600 would join them. This suggestion David readily accepted; and while the lords of the Philistines marched with their hundreds and their thousands, he and his men came up with Achis in the rear. But when the commanders of the Philistines beheld David, they said to Achis: "Let this man return and abide in the place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest he turn against us when we begin to fight." The proposal grieved Achis, and although he himself never doubted David's fidelity, there was nothing left for him but to comply; he accordingly called David to him and told him of their decision. That he might not increase the suspicions of the Philistines, David protested: "What have I done, or what hast thou found in me, thy servant, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" But when Achis explained to him that he was powerless

to change what had already been decided upon at the council of the chiefs, David consented to retire, and next morning set out with all his men from Aphec on his return for Siceleg.

Siceleg burnt by the Amalecites.

When they arrived there on the third day they found that a great calamity had befallen them. The Amalecites, to revenge themselves for David's incursions into their territories, had suddenly appeared before Siceleg, and finding it unprotected, had plundered it and burnt it to the ground, carrying off as captives all the women and children. David was greatly afflicted; and his followers not only wept for grief at the loss of all they held dear, but casting the blame on David, threatened to stone him to death. David's courage did not fail him; but putting his trust in God, he called Abiathar, the priest, and after ascertaining that it was the Divine will that he should go in pursuit, and that success would attend his efforts, he straightway set out.

David pursues the Amalecites.

So vigorously did he follow up the marauders that when he came to the torrent Besor some 200 were too weary and fatigued to cross. Still undismayed, David left them in charge of the baggage, and pressed forward with the remaining 400. Not far from this spot they chanced to meet with an Egyptian straggler, a servant of one of the Amalecites, whom they found in a field half-dead from hunger and exhaustion, for he had been left behind by his master as he was unable to keep pace with the rest. He was immediately supplied with food; and when his strength began to return he told David where he would find his enemy, and offered to guide him to the spot. Gladly availing himself of his services, David fell upon the Amalecites, who were feasting and drinking in the greatest disorder, believing themselves secure from attack.

The surprise was complete, and David's attack so sudden that not a man escaped except those who were provided with camels. Not only did David recover the women and children, but all that the Amalecites had taken, and much spoil in addition, fell into his hands. But when it came to the division of the spoil, an unexpected dispute arose. The 400 who had kept up the pursuit claimed it as their own, alleging that those who had stayed behind at the torrent Besor had forfeited all title to a share. But David gave it as a law, to be observed now and henceforth, that those who remained behind to guard the baggage were to be awarded an equal share of the spoil with the rest. Thus, not only did each man get back what he had lost, but much booty over and above; moreover, to the ancients of those cities of Juda that had remained friendly to him, David also sent large presents from the spoil.

CHAPTER LXII

THE WITCH OF ENDOR—BATTLE OF MOUNT GELBOE AND DEATH OF SAUL, B.C. 1055

Saul consults the Lord in vain.

MEANWHILE the Philistines, who had advanced as far as the vale of Jezrahel, encamped near Sunam on the hillside, while Saul had assembled his army to oppose them on the opposite slopes of Mount Gelboe. But when he beheld the enemy's army, and saw their vast numbers, his heart sank within him, and he was greatly troubled. That he might know beforehand what would be the result of the battle, he consulted the Lord; but God turned away from the man who had slain so many of his sacred ministers, and answered him neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets. Finding himself thus abandoned, he was on the point of giving way to despair, when he bethought

himself of one more expedient: he would have recourse to witchcraft.

Now at the beginning of his reign Saul had banished from his kingdom soothsayers, and all such as practised divination, and he was doubtful whether there was anyone still left who would be able to serve him in his extremity. Having learnt, however, on inquiry, that in one of the caverns at Endor there dwelt a woman possessed of a divining spirit, he straightway disguised himself, and with but two attendants set out by night to seek her dwelling. Endor was distant from Gelboe some four hours' walk, but Saul on this occasion had to make a long détour to avoid the enemy.

he witch of ndor.

Arrived at the cavern, they found the woman, whom Saul addressed as follows: "Bring me up him whom I shall tell thee." But she answered: "Behold thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out magicians and soothsayers from the land; why, then, dost thou lay a snare for my life, to cause me to be put to death?" Reassured, however, by the king's oath that no harm should befall her, she inquired whom he wished to be raised. Hardly had he told her that it was Samuel that he wished to be brought up, when behold! that instant Samuel stood before her. He appeared before she had begun her incantations, and not by any magical power, but because God was pleased, for the punishment of Saul, that Samuel himself should announce the evils that were coming upon him. The witch was filled with alarm by the suddenness of the apparition, and cried out to the king: "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" He then bade her fear not, but tell him what it was that she saw. On her saying that she beheld an old man covered with a mantle, Saul understood that it was Samuel, and bowed down to the ground. "Why," said Samuel, "hast thou disturbed

he ghost of amuel.

my rest, that I should be brought up?" Saul made answer: "I am in great distress, for the Philistines fight against me, and God is departed from me and would not hear me; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest show me what I shall do." Samuel continued: "Why askest thou me, seeing that the Lord hath departed from thee, and is gone over to thy rival? For the Lord will do to thee as He spoke by me, and He will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand, and will give it to thy neighbour David, because thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord, neither didst thou execute the wrath of His indignation upon Amalec. And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines, and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me." On hearing this terrible sentence, Saul fell prostrate upon the ground, overcome with fear and exhaustion, for he had not touched food all that day. His servants raised him up, and besought him to partake of a little food, so that he might recover his strength, and be able to return to the camp. At first he refused to be comforted, but was at length prevailed upon to eat of the meal which the woman had prepared, whereupon his strength was so far restored that he was able that same night to go back to the army.

Death of Saul.

Next morning the battle commenced, and so terrible was the onslaught of the Philistines that the Israelites fell back, with their ranks broken and disordered. Knowing that God was no longer with them, they made but a feeble resistance. At the first discharge from the archers there fell Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchisua, and the king himself was dangerously wounded by an arrow. Fearing lest he should fall into the hands of the Philistines, he called to his armour-bearer: "Draw thy sword and kill me, lest these uncircumcised come and slay me, and mock at me." Filled with horror, the man refused to obey the

command, whereupon the king, pointing the sword to his own breast, fell upon it and died. When the armour-bearer saw what he had done, he too ended his life by throwing himself upon his sword. The rout was general; and even the Israelites dwelling beyond the Jordan did not escape disaster, for when they learnt that the Philistines had crossed the river, many abandoned their cities to the mercy of the enemy and fled for safety.

Next morning when the Philistines came to strip the slain they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gelboe. They took away their armour, and cut off Saul's head, which they sent round in triumph among all their people. The king's armour they placed in the temple of Astaroth, but his body and those of his sons they hung on the wall of Bethsan. When the inhabitants of Jabes-Galaad heard what had happened to Saul, remembering with gratitude the deliverance which he had procured for them at the beginning of his reign, they sent their most valiant men, who, coming by night to Bethsan, took down the four bodies and brought them to their own city. After they had burned them, they gathered up the bones and the ashes that remained, and these they buried with all respect in the wood of Jabes; they also fasted for seven days.

ow the ilistines ated the in.

Saul is a figure of those who, after yielding to temptations, persist and die in their evil ways. He gave no signs of repentance, and the Spirit of God pronounces his condemnation. "So Saul died for his iniquities, because he transgressed the commandment of the Lord which He commanded, and kept it not: and, moreover, consulted also a witch, and trusted not in the Lord: therefore He slew him, and transferred his kingdom to David, the son of Isai" (1 Par. x. 13, 14).

ul's end.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

OTHERWISE CALLED

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

This Book, as well as the last six chapters of the preceding one, is generally supposed to have been written by the prophets Nathan and Gad, and contains the history of David to the end of the pestilence which was sent as a punishment for his numbering the people, B.C. 1055 to B.C. 1017. After the death of Saul, his general, Abner, set Isboseth, the son of the deceased monarch, upon the throne at Mahanaim. David was 30 years old when he was anointed at Hebron, where he reigned over Juda for 7½ years. On the death of Isboseth he was anointed a third time as king of all Israel, and reigned in that character 33 years.

CHAPTER LXIII

DAVID REMOVES TO HEBRON—RIVAL KINGDOM OF ISBOSETH, B.C. 1055

Grief of David for Saul.

On the third day after David's return from his pursuit of the Amalecites, there came to him a man from Saul's camp, with his garments rent, and dust strewn upon his head, the bearer of the woeful tidings that Israel had been defeated, and that Saul and his three sons were numbered among the slain. Far from rejoicing over Saul's death, David was filled with grief; and when the messenger, a young Amalecite, thinking no doubt to win favour, stated that he himself, at the king's request, had run him through with his sword to prevent him from falling into the hands of the Philistines, and in proof of the truth of his words displayed the diadem and bracelet that Saul had been accustomed to wear, David wept tears of bitter anguish. Rending his garments, and abandoning himself to his sorrow, he fasted till evening after which he called the messenger and said to him: "Why didst thou not fear to put out thy hand to kill the

Lord's anointed? Thy blood be upon thy own head, for thy own mouth hath spoken against thee." He then turned to his servants and commanded them to cut down the man where he stood.

avid's mentation for aul and Jona- an.

In a beautiful canticle, David now poured forth his sorrow for the death of Saul, and in words expressive of the tenderest affection bewailed the loss of his beloved friend Jonathan: "The illustrious of Israel are slain upon thy mountains: how are the valiant fallen? Tell it not in Geth, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gelboe, let neither dew nor rain come upon you, nor let there be in you fields of first-fruits; for there was cast away the shield of the valiant, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. . . . Saul and Jonathan, lovely and comely in their life, even in death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions. I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan, exceedingly beautiful. . . . As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee" (2 Kings i. 19-27).

avid anointed ing of Juda.

As it was now the time for action, David left off his mourning, and guided by the Divine direction went up to Hebron, accompanied by his two wives, Achinoam and Abigail, and his trusted followers. Hebron was a very strong city, situated in the centre of Juda, and here the men of that tribe assembled and anointed him as their king. When it was made known to him how the people of Jabes-Galaad had honourably buried Saul and his sons, he made it his first care to send messengers to thank them for their piety towards their late king, and at the same time to announce his own accession to the throne of Juda. "Blessed be you to the Lord," he said, "who have showed this mercy to

your master Saul, and have buried him. I also will requite you for this good turn, because you have done this thing."

The rival kingdom of Isboseth.

The other tribes, headed by Saul's general, Abner, proclaimed Isboseth, the eldest surviving son of Saul, king over the rest of the tribes of Israel; and the new king fixed his capital at Mahanaim (*The Camps*), on the east of the Jordan. Thus was the nation divided into two parties. David was now 30 years old, and for seven and a half years reigned at Hebron as king over Juda. It was not till after a lapse of two years that the forces of the two kings came into collision, and soon after that the power of Isboseth was greatly weakened first by the defeat, and afterwards by the defection, of Abner. Having marched his army to Gabaon, in the tribe of Benjamin, some six miles from Jerusalem, Abner was met by David's forces, under the command of Joab, son of Sarvia, the sister of David. Thus commenced that civil war which lasted for upwards of five years, during which Abner was treacherously murdered and Isboseth cruelly assassinated.

The Field of the Valiant.

The two armies stood facing each other on opposite sides of the Pool of Gabaon; but before the battle became general, it was agreed between the two leaders that twelve men, remarkable for their strength and courage, should be chosen from each army to fight in deadly combat in sight of the assembled forces. They engaged at close quarters, and in the fierce struggle every man slew his opponent, each burying his sword in the side of his antagonist. In memory of this event, the spot received the name of *The Field of the Valiant.*

Defeat of Abner by Joab.

In the battle which followed, Abner's forces were defeated and put to flight. Abner himself escaped from the field, closely pursued by Joab's brother Asael, a man so swift of foot that he is described as being "fleet as the roes that abide in the

woods." Unable to outrun him, Abner twice entreated Asael to desist from the pursuit. "Go off," he said, "and do not follow me, lest I be obliged to stab thee to the ground, and I shall not be able to hold up my face to Joab thy brother." But Asael paid no heed to his words, and would not turn aside either to the right or to the left, whereupon Abner, with a back stroke of his spear, thrust him through, and he died upon the spot. When the rest came up they were filled with dismay at finding Asael stretched dead upon the ground, and all gathered round the corpse; but when his brothers Joab and Abisai saw that he was dead, they gave orders for the pursuit to be renewed.

oab returns Hebron.

It was after sunset when they came up with Abner, who had drawn together his men on the top of a hill; and when he remonstrated with them, telling them that, if they continued to press further, his men would be rendered desperate, Joab gave the signal for the pursuit to be discontinued. Marching all that night, he returned to Hebron, carrying along with him the body of Asael, which he laid in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Of Abner's forces there fell 360 men, while Joab lost 19 in addition to Asael.

Abner also withdrew and came to Mahanaim; but from this time the power of Isboseth began gradually to decline, while that of David grew daily stronger and stronger as the war dragged wearily on.

oner comes er to David.

At length Abner took offence at Isboseth, because he had upbraided him with having married Respha, who had been Saul's concubine, a name given in Scripture to such lawful wives as were of an inferior degree; for to marry the king's widow was deemed almost equal to an open attempt upon the throne. Abner bore the reproof ill, and complained that, considering his great services, Isboseth had not done him justice. Indeed, so much did he take to heart the king's reprimand

that he sent messengers to David, offering to transfer to him the allegiance of all the tribes of Israel, if he would but make a league with him. David consented to the proposal, and readily made use of him to obtain his rights, but refused to see him till he had procured for him the restoration of his wife Michol, Saul's daughter. Isboseth treated David's request most graciously, and gave orders that Michol should at once be taken from Phalti, and restored to her lawful husband. Abner then conferred with the ancients of Israel, reminding them of their expressed wish that David should reign over them, and of God's promise to deliver them by the hand of David out of the power of the Philistines, and from all their enemies. Receiving a satisfactory reply, he set out with twenty followers to visit David in Hebron. A great feast was made for him and the men that accompanied him, and David received him with every mark of respect. The conference over, Abner was accompanied by David a little way on his journey, and after he had been dismissed with words of peace, set out to gather to his standard the tribes of Israel.

Abner treacherously slain by Joab.

Scarcely had he departed when Joab returned from an expedition against some robber chieftains who had made incursions into David's territories; and hearing of Abner's visit and of the agreement arrived at between him and the king, he was filled with anger, and charged the king with having acted imprudently in receiving Abner, who had come merely as a spy from Isboseth to report on the state of David's kingdom. As soon as he left David's presence, he secretly sent messengers in the king's name requesting Abner to return at once to Hebron for further deliberation. Suspecting no mischief, Abner immediately retraced his steps. But when he reached the gate of the city he was met by Joab, who drew him aside as if to hold private

converse with him, and there, assisted by Abisai, he treacherously murdered him, both out of envy and in revenge for the death of their brother Asael, whom he had slain, though unwillingly, and in open warfare.

avid's grief r Abner.

When word of this dark deed was brought to David, he was filled with indignation and sorrow, and calling down an imprecation on Joab and his house, he said: "I and my kingdom are innocent before the Lord for ever of the blood of Abner, the son of Ner; and may it come upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house." Joab was too powerful for David to inflict that punishment upon him which his crime merited, yet did he compel him, clothed in sackcloth, to join in the universal mourning. Abner was publicly buried at Hebron, David himself following the bier. Weeping bitter tears at the grave, the king said: "Not as cowards are wont to die hath Abner died. Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet loaded with fetters; but as men fall before the children of iniquity, so didst thou fall." Then turning to the people, he said: "Do you not know that a prince and a great man is slain this day in Israel?" All who heard him were pleased, and all that the king did seemed good in the sight of the people.

rder of oseth, 1048.

The power of Isboseth was much weakened by the loss of Abner, nor did he long survive him. Two of his chief captains, Rechab and his brother Baana, formed a conspiracy to murder him, in the hope of thus finding favour with David. One day, at noon, finding him alone and asleep on his bed, and the door-keeper also asleep, they crept stealthily into the room, and stabbed him to death as he lay there helpless. They then cut off his head, and withdrawing as noiselessly as they had come, hurried away before the alarm could be given. For a night and a day they hurried on, carefully

avoiding all frequented spots; and at length, having arrived at Hebron, they came to David, carrying with them the head of Isboseth. They thought their reward would be great, and that David would be overjoyed at hearing of the death of his rival, but they were quickly undeceived when he thus addressed them: "The man who told me that Saul was dead, and who hoped to be rewarded for his supposed good tidings, I apprehended and slew in Siceleg. How much more now, when wicked men have slain an innocent man in his own house, upon his bed, shall I not require his blood at your hand, and take you away from the earth?" He then gave orders for them to be put to death at once, their hands and feet to be lopped off, and their bodies to be hung over the pool of Hebron; but the head of Isboseth he caused to be buried with marks of deepest respect in the tomb of Abner, so far was he from countenancing treachery even against those whose death might seem to be an advantage to him.

Miphiboseth.

David was now without a rival. Miphiboseth, indeed, the son of Jonathan, a boy twelve years of age, was still alive, but was too young to cause any anxiety, and was, moreover, lame. At the time when tidings of the death of Saul and Jonathan were brought, his nurse took him up and fled; but as she hastened along with her charge, she stumbled, and let him fall from her arms. From the injuries received in this accident he was lame ever afterwards.

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CHAPTER LXIV

DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL, B.C. 1048 TO B.C. 1015—REMOVAL OF THE ARK

Now that Isboseth was dead, a deputation from all the tribes waited upon David to offer him the crown, after he had reigned upwards of seven years at Hebron as king of Juda. After a solemn covenant had been entered into with them, he was anointed king over all Israel.

David's third anointing.

He began his reign by effecting a transference of the seat of government from Hebron to Jerusalem. To accomplish his purpose, he found it necessary to wrest its citadel from the Jebusites, who had managed to hold it during the 400 years the Israelites had been in their country. So impregnable did they deem their stronghold that, when David proceeded to lay siege to it, they thought the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend it. These, then, they arranged along the walls, as if in mockery of David and all his host, and as though secure against every attack that could be made against them. Stung by so great an insult, and filled with rage, David proclaimed that the first to scale the rocky heights should be made the chief captain of all his forces. All were ambitious to secure the coveted distinction, and a mighty effort was made to carry off the palm; but Joab outdid the rest, and reaped the reward of his bravery. The citadel of Sion speedily fell, and this, along with the city, which David repaired, became the new capital—"The City of David." And the Lord God of hosts was with David, and his affairs prospered daily more and more.

David makes Jerusalem his capital.

News of the capture of the Jebusite stronghold soon travelled to the surrounding nations, and Hiram, king of

Tyre, wishing to secure David's friendship, sent messengers to him with presents of cedar-wood and other materials for building; while along with these he despatched men skilled in architecture, that they might build for him a royal palace at Jerusalem. When this was finished, David transferred to it his numerous household; for in addition to Michol, Achinoam, and Abigail, he had married other wives, and had many sons and daughters.

Hiram, king of Tyre.

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they began to be alarmed for their own power, and gathered their forces together in the valley of Raphaim, determined to inflict a decisive blow on one whom they had so much cause to fear. As soon as David heard of this hostile move against him, he hastened to consult the Lord through the High Priest, so that he might learn what was the will of God, and what would be the issue of the battle. On receiving a promise of victory, he went forth to meet the Philistines, and having defeated them with great slaughter, succeeded in capturing their idols, which in their flight they had left on the battlefield.

Defeat of the Philistines.

A deed of very great daring was performed on the eve of this battle by three of David's most valiant men, who went through the midst of the enemy to fetch water from the spring of Bethlehem. At that time the Philistine army was encamped in the valley that stretches to Bethlehem. David had chanced to say to those who stood near him: "O, that some man would give me a drink of the water out of the cistern that is in Bethlehem, by the gate." Thereupon, three of the bravest of his followers, considering the desire of their king as a command, determined to hazard the attempt, and succeeded in making their way through the Philistine camp, and returning in safety,

David desires water from Bethlehem.

carrying with them the water for which he had so ardently craved. But when they brought it to him, he would not drink, but offered it as a libation to the Lord, judging that what had been obtained at such a cost was too precious for the use of man.

out of the hilistines.

A second time the Philistines came in arms into the valley of Raphaim, and again the victory fell to David, who received a sign from Heaven when he was to fall upon the enemy. In the midst of a dead calm, God's presence was made known to him by a rustling in the tops of the pear-trees, among which the Israelites lay concealed. David rose up at once, gave the signal to advance, surprised the Philistines, and put them to utter rout. After this, the fame of David spread into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.

emoval of e Ark.

Being now at leisure to turn his thoughts to more peaceful matters, David's first concern was to have the Ark of God brought to Jerusalem from Cariathiarim, where it had rested for so many years in the house of Abinadab. He accordingly called together a numerous assembly of priests and people to meet him at Cariathiarim; and when the Ark had been placed on a new cart drawn by oxen, a solemn procession was formed and started on its way with music and song, and with great rejoicing. The king himself and the whole multitude of the people went before the Ark, while in charge of it walked Abinadab's two sons, Oza and Ahio.

a struck ad.

All went well till the procession reached the threshing-floor of Nachon (or Chidon); but here one of the oxen became restless and began to kick, so that the Ark seemed to be in danger of falling. To prevent so great an accident, Oza stretched out his hand and took hold of the Ark; but the indigna-

tion of the Lord was enkindled against him, and for his rashness he was struck dead upon the spot. Because he was not a priest, and yet touched the Ark, God sent upon him this dreadful judgment as a terrible warning to teach men with what caution sacred things were to be treated, and how exactly all His injunctions were to be observed. Oza had touched the Ark uncovered. Even the placing of it on a cart, instead of on the shoulders of the Levites, was contrary to the law of Moses; and the sons of Caath, to whom the privilege of carrying it belonged, could only do so after it had been enfolded in three covers.

The Ark in the house of Obededom.

David himself was struck with fear and alarm, and stopped the procession, not daring to carry out his intention of having the Ark conveyed into his own city. They therefore turned aside, and deposited it in the house of a pious Levite named Obededom, where it remained three months.

The Ark conveyed to Mount Sion.

When David heard that the Lord had blessed Obededom and all his house on account of the Ark, he again made preparations for removing it to the royal city, to be placed in the new Tabernacle which he had erected for it on Mount Sion. He took with him seven choirs; and when the Levites who carried the Ark had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a ram. Laying aside his royal robes, and clothed with a linen ephod, David himself, playing upon the harp and dancing, led the procession, which advanced amid shouts of joy and sound of trumpet till it reached Jerusalem. With marks of great fervour and reverence, the Ark, the symbol of God's presence among His people, was placed in the Tabernacle; and when holocausts and peace-offerings had been sacrificed, David blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed to all the multitude of Israel, both men and women, a loaf of bread and a cake of fine flour, with a portion of the sacrifice.

He next went in to bless his own house; whereupon his wife Michol, the daughter of Saul, coming out to meet him, taunted him, and spoke scornfully of the unkingly manner in which he had conducted himself by dancing so unbecomingly before all his subjects. David answered: "Before the Lord who chose me rather than thy father and than all his house, and commanded me to be ruler over the people of the Lord in Israel, I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done: I will be little in my own eyes, and thus I shall appear more glorious." As a punishment for her pride, Michol remained childless to the day of her death.

The building of the Temple postponed.

Comparing the magnificence of his own palace of cedar with the humble Tabernacle in which the Ark of God rested, David's soul was filled with zeal for God's glory, and calling to him the prophet Nathan, he thus addressed him: "Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the Ark of God is lodged within skins?" The holy prophet was pleased with David's pious wish, and bade him do all that was within his heart, because the Lord was with him. He considered David's proposal so just that it might safely be carried into effect. God, however, determined otherwise, thus showing that the prophets are not inspired in all their actions; for that same night Nathan was warned in a vision to say in God's name to the king: "When thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his kingdom. *He* shall build a house to My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. My mercy I will not take away from him, as I took it from Saul. Thy house shall be faithful, and thy kingdom for ever before thy face, and thy throne shall be firm for ever." God even vouchsafed to assign the reason why He denied to David the privilege of erecting a temple in His honour—viz., because he had made many wars and had shed much blood.

The foregoing prophecy we see fulfilled partly in Solomon, but more especially in Christ, who in Scripture is called the Son of David, and was the builder of the true Temple, the Church, His everlasting kingdom, which shall never fail, nor be cast off for any iniquity of her children. The spiritual kingdom of the Messias will last to the end of time, and be perfected in eternity.

Nathan's prophecy.

On hearing the prophet's message, David humbly resigned himself to the Divine will, saying: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far? Thou art magnified, O Lord, because there is none like to Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee. And now begin, and bless the house of Thy servant, that it may endure for ever before Thee: because Thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it, and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever."

David's humble resignation.

CHAPTER LXV

DAVID'S VICTORIES OVER THE AMMONITES—HIS SIN

We next read of a long succession of victories and conquests, by which David secured the happiness of his subjects and greatly extended his territories. He again defeated the Philistines, and compelled them to forego the annual tribute to which, for so many years, they had subjected the Israelites. He then turned his arms against the Moabites and imposed tribute upon them. Pushing his conquests to the Euphrates, he defeated Adarezer, king of Soba, who lost 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 footmen, besides 100 chariots. The Syrians of Damascus, who were advancing to the

A succession of victories.

succour of Adarezer, he met and overthrew, inflicting on them a loss of 22,000 men; while Damascus itself he made tributary, and garrisoned it with his own troops. The golden bucklers captured from the bodyguard of Adarezer, together with a great quantity of brass and many gold and silver vessels taken from the nations which he had subdued, he carried with him to Jerusalem and dedicated to the service of the Lord. When Thou, king of Emath, heard of the defeat of his enemy Adarezer, he sent his son Joram with presents to David, to congratulate him, and to salute him in his name. Joram was received with great honour, and on the termination of his mission, was dismissed with the respect due to his exalted rank. David established garrisons among the Edomites and made himself master of all their country, and the Lord preserved him in all his enterprises. Reigning over all Israel, he executed judgment and justice to all his people, and was well supported by his chief officers.

Joab, his nephew, was a great warrior, and had done much to establish the throne of his uncle. His power and influence were very great, and as the reward of his services in the capture of Jebus, he had been raised to the position of commander-in-chief of all the forces.

Joab commander-in-chief.

Josaphat, the son of Ahilud, was his recorder, or chancellor, whose duty it was to keep a journal of all memorable transactions, and to present petitions and memorials from the people.

Recorder, or chancellor.

During the contest between the families of Saul and David, two High Priests were acknowledged in their respective dominions—viz., Sadoc, the son of Achitob, of the family of Phinees, who, even during the reign of David, was permitted to officiate at Gabaon; and Abiathar, the son of Achimelech,

Double High-Priesthood.

whom Saul slew. Some, however, are of opinion that Abiathar was the sole pontiff from the time when his father was murdered by Saul, and that Sadoc was his archpriest, or delegate, at Gabaon.

David's scribe or secretary was Saraias, while Banaias, the son of Joiada, had command over the Cerethi and Phelethi, the royal bodyguard. The sons of David were known as the princes.

Officers and princes.

Mindful of the covenant of friendship which he had made with Jonathan, David asked those about him: "Is there any one, think you, left of the house of Saul, that I may show kindness to him for Jonathan's sake?" Hearing from Siba, a former servant of Saul, that Miphiboseth was still living in the house of Machir, he sent for him at once; and when he came and bowed down before him, David bade him be of good cheer and fear not: "For," said he, "I will surely show thee mercy for thy father's sake, and I will restore to thee the lands of Saul, and thou shalt eat bread at my table always." Moreover, he committed to the charge of Siba and his fifteen sons and twenty servants the duty of managing the property of Miphiboseth, bidding them till his lands, and bring him the profits of all to Jerusalem. This they did; and Miphiboseth, with his young son Micha, dwelt at Jerusalem, and was to David as one of his own sons.

Miphiboseth, Jonathan's son.

About this time died Naas, king of the Ammonites, who had befriended David in the days of his persecution, and had shown great kindness to him. Naas was succeeded by his son Hanon, and David, hearing of his elevation to the throne, said "I will show kindness to Hanon, as his father showed kindness to me." He accordingly sent ambassadors to him to condole with him on the death of his father, and at the same time to extend to him his favour and friendship

The Ammonites abuse David's ambassadors.

But Hanon foolishly allowed himself to be guided by wicked counsellors, who persuaded their master that David's messengers were none other than spies. In an evil moment Hanon gave ear to their advice, and ordered the ambassadors to be seized. He then had half of their beards shaved off, and half of their garments cut away; and after heaping upon them every kind of indignity, dismissed them, and bade them return home. When report of their treatment reached David, he was fired with anger at the insult, and sent messengers to meet them and bid them stay at Jericho till their beards were grown again, after which they were to come to him.

War with the Ammonites.

War was inevitable, and this the Ammonites recognised; for no sooner had they thus scornfully sent away the ambassadors than they began to make hasty preparations for the impending strife, and even appealed for aid to their Syrian allies, who joined them with a force of 33,000 men. When David heard this, he saw that no time was to be lost, and despatched Joab at the head of the army of Israel to march against the enemy. Finding the Ammonites drawn up in battle array over against Rabbath, their capital, and the Syrian mercenaries disposed in the plain apart, ready to fall upon his rear, Joab made a hasty division of his men, and resolved with a chosen band to fall upon the Syrians, while he committed the charge of dealing with the Ammonites to his brother Abisai. His plan met with the greatest success. The Syrians were routed and fled; and the Ammonites, terrified at beholding the flight of their allies, hastily withdrew into the city before Abisai. After this, Joab returned to Jerusalem.

A great Syrian confederacy under Adarezer was now formed against Israel, and it was determined by a mighty stroke to wipe out the disgrace which had befallen their arms. Even the Syrians beyond the Euphrates resolved

to take part in the struggle. When David became aware of the preparations that were being made to crush Israel, he would no longer entrust the command of his armies to his generals, but marched out in person to lead the Israelites to battle. He crossed the Jordan, fell upon the Syrians, and defeated them with great slaughter. Seven hundred of the enemy's charioteers were slain, besides 40,000 horsemen and a great number of footmen, while Sobach, their general, fell mortally wounded; moreover, there fled from the field of battle eight and fifty thousand men. Fearing any longer to fight the cause of the Ammonites, the Syrians made peace and paid tribute to Israel.

The Syrian confederacy against Israel.

Next year, Joab was sent to lead his army into the lands of the Ammonites, and to lay siege to Rabbath, but David remained at Jerusalem. This inactivity on the part of David led immediately to his downfall. Rising from his couch one evening, he walked, as was his custom, on the roof of his palace, and from there beheld a woman of remarkable beauty, named Bethsabee, the daughter of Eliam, and wife of Urias the Hethite. Yielding to a wicked curiosity, the king sent a messenger to inquire who she was, and on being told that she was the wife of his trusted officer, Urias, who was then in the field with Joab, he sent for her, and overcome by his passion, committed adultery with her. Hoping to conceal his guilt, and to screen Bethsabee from the shameful death which was meted out to the adulteress, he sent for Urias, as though to inquire of him concerning the progress of the war, but in reality to persuade him to return home. His artifice not only failed but served to enhance the noble character of the man he had injured. After leaving David's presence, Urias, instead of going to his house, slept before the palace gate with the other officers of the king. Learning what he had done

David and Bethsabee.

David next day called him, and asked: "Didst thou not come from thy journey? Why didst thou not go down to thy house?" Urias ardently replied: "The Ark of God, and Israel, and Juda dwell in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord abide upon the face of the earth: and shall I go into my house to eat and drink and remain with my wife? By thy welfare, and the welfare of thy soul, I will not do this thing." After many expedients to move the resolve of Urias had been tried in vain, and when David found that it was no longer possible for his crime to remain hidden, he devised the cruel expedient of sending him with a letter to Joab, bidding him expose the bearer in the thickest part of the fight, from which there was no hope of his coming out alive. Totally unconscious of the wrong that was being done him, Urias was placed where the fight was likely to be hottest.

rder of
ias.

All happened as the king most desired; for next day the Ammonites made a sudden sally, and fell with irresistible fury on the small band to which Urias had been attached. Urias was numbered among the slain, and news of what had happened was sent to the king without delay. Seemingly untroubled by so black a murder, David merely attributed what had happened to the fortune of war, and returned the following message to Joab: "Let not this thing discourage thee, for various is the event of war; and sometimes one, sometimes another, is consumed by the sword." Hearing that her husband was dead, Bethsabee mourned for him; but when the days of mourning were past, she was married to David, and bore him a son. But "this thing which David had done was displeasing to the Lord."

What a terrible warning should David's double fall be even to the most virtuous, who are never beyond the reach of temptation! How soon may the man *according to God's own heart* fall from his elevated station into the

depths of the abyss! Till now we have seen in David one who would not hurt even his persecutor. What a change, then, does a single shameful passion, given way to, introduce into the whole conduct of a man, and how quickly does one false step lead from abyss to abyss!

CHAPTER LXVI

DAVID'S REPENTANCE AND AFFLICTIONS

NEARLY a whole year elapsed, and still David continued blind and impenitent. But at length God sent to him the prophet Nathan, who, in the parable of the *The Rich man and the Poor man's Ewe-lamb*, recalled him to a sense of his guilt, but only after he had unconsciously pronounced sentence upon himself. Coming into the king's presence, Nathan addressed to him the following parable: "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. But the poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished, and which had grown up in his house, together with his children, eating of his bread, and drinking of his cup, and sleeping in his bosom; and it was unto him as a daughter. And when a certain stranger was come to the rich man, he refused to take of his own sheep and oxen to make a feast for the stranger, but took the poor man's ewe, which he killed and dressed."

Nathan's parable.

On hearing this, David was unable to restrain his anger, and said to Nathan: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a child of death. He shall restore the ewe fourfold, because he did this thing, and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David: "Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered

David's sentence.

thee from the hand of Saul. I gave thee wives, and the house of Israel and Juda; and if these things be little, I shall add far greater things unto thee. Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord to do evil in My sight? Thou hast killed Urias, the Hethite, with the sword of the children of Ammon, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. Therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised Me: I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house. Thou didst act secretly, but I will do this thing in the sight of all Israel.'" David's heart was touched with repentance, and with feelings of the bitterest sorrow he humbly acknowledged his offence, saying: "I have sinned against the Lord." Then Nathan said to him: "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die."

ath of vid's child.

Shortly after this, the infant son of Bethsabee fell sick, and its life was despaired of. Overcome with grief, David besought the Lord for the child, that its life might be spared, and for several days lay upon the ground fasting and weeping, and refusing all consolation. His servants brought him food and wished to raise him from the ground, but he would not be comforted. At last, on the seventh day, the child died, but his attendants feared to tell him, for they said: "Behold, when the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he would not hearken to our voice: how much more will he afflict himself if we tell him that the child is no more?" But when David saw them whispering to one another, he understood what had happened, and inquired if the child was dead. Being told that such was the case, he rose up at once, and after he had washed himself and changed his apparel, he went into the house of the Lord

and worshipped. He then came into his own house, and having called for bread, he ate. His servants, filled with surprise, said to him: "What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but after it was dead, thou didst rise up and eat bread." David answered: "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept for him; for I said: 'Who knoweth whether the Lord may not give him to me, and the child may live?' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Shall I be able to bring him back any more? I shall go to him rather, but he shall not return to me."

David comforted Bethsabee, and in course of time God blessed her with another son, whom they named Solomon (*the pacific*); but Nathan called his name Jedidiah (*Amiable to the Lord*), because the Lord loved him. He was destined to be the successor of David, and one from whom the Messias was to descend.

Birth of Solomon.

In the meantime, Joab had pushed the Ammonite campaign almost to its conclusion, and now laid close siege to the royal city of Rabbath. When the city was on the point of falling into his hands, he sent messengers to David asking him to come in person to complete the victory, lest the honour of taking the city should fall upon him and not upon the king. David accordingly marched out at the head of a large force; and soon after his arrival at Rabbath, the city was reduced to the last extremity, and captured. All the inhabitants he put to death, and the city itself he gave up to plunder, having reserved for himself the king's crown, which weighed a talent of gold and was set with precious stones. Then, laden with spoil, David returned with all the army to Jerusalem.

Capture of Rabbath.

With the reduction of Rabbath, David had come to the last of his conquests, and his kingdom now reached those

limits which had been foretold to Abraham, viz., from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. But the doom pronounced over him by the prophet Nathan was soon to be fulfilled to the very letter.

hamar and mnon.

The king had a daughter named Thamar, who was of surpassing beauty, and was loved by her half-brother Amnon; and although the law forbade marriage between two so nearly related, Amnon determined that nothing should stand in the way of his affection. By a cunning device, he contrived to carry out his unlawful design; but no sooner had he succeeded in his wicked purpose than his love was turned into loathing; and overwhelmed with grief and shame, Thamar was driven forcibly from his door. Weeping, and in pitiable plight, she was met by her brother Absalom, who, when he learned the cause of her grief, bade her be comforted and return with him to his house, where, as a widow, she continued to dwell for a long time.

salom bent revenge.

Word of what had been done reached David's ears, and he was grieved exceedingly; but because of his love for Amnon, his first-born son, he abstained from inflicting upon him that punishment which the greatness of his guilt so richly merited. But feelings of bitter hatred towards Amnon rankled in the breast of Absalom on account of his sister's wrongs, and he watched for a fitting opportunity of revenge.

nnon is slain.

For two years the brothers exchanged not a word but after that, at sheep-shearing time, Absalom prepared a great feast, to which he invited all the king's sons, and with the rest came the unsuspecting Amnon. Now Absalom had given secret instructions to his servants that, when they perceived Amnon to be overcome with wine, they were to fall upon him and slay him on a given signal. "For," said he, "it is I that command

you." The banquet was continued amid the greatest rejoicing, and all went merrily; but the moment of revenge was quickly drawing near. No sooner was it evident to Absalom that Amnon's brain was becoming confused with wine than, raising his voice, he exclaimed: "Strike!" As quick as thought each of Absalom's servants drew forth his weapon, and before anyone was aware of what was intended, they pierced the guilty Amnon to the heart. In a moment all was confusion; and the rest of the king's sons, not knowing what might follow, mounted their mules and fled with all speed.

Absalom's flight.

Before they reached Jerusalem, a messenger had already preceded them, and had announced to the king that all his sons were slain. Overcome with sorrow, David rent his garments, and fell upon the ground, lamenting his bitter loss. Soon, however, he was joined by those of his sons who had fled from Absalom, and they mingled their tears with those of their father and his servants in bewailing the untimely death of Amnon. Absalom fled to his grandfather Tholomai, king of Gessur, with whom he remained three years. After a time, when David had become more reconciled to the loss of Amnon, his feelings of resentment towards Absalom began to cool, and he gave up all thoughts of punishing him.

Joab procures Absalom's return.

Anxious to bring about a complete reconciliation between father and son, Joab employed the services of a woman of Thecua, whom he instructed to appear before the king, clad in garments of mourning, and to relate to him a story designed to resemble in every point the case of the king's sons, Absalom and Ammon. Coming into David's presence, she prostrated herself before him and said: "Save me, O king." On David's inquiring the cause of her grief, she continued: "Alas, thy handmaid had two

sons, who quarrelled with each other in the field, and there being none to part them, the one struck the other and slew him. And behold the whole kindred, rising against thy handmaid, saith: 'Deliver him that hath slain his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew, and that we may destroy the heir;' and they seek to leave my husband no name, nor remainder upon the earth." By the recital of her troubles, David was moved to pity, and said: "As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth." Then did she apply the parable to David himself, and asked why he did not bring home again his own exiled son, the banished Absalom, whose crime did but resemble the one which he had declared himself willing to pardon on the entreaty of a poor widow. David now began to suspect that it was Joab who had put these words into the woman's mouth, and learning that such was indeed the case, he sent for him and said: "Behold, I am appeased, and have granted thy request: go, therefore, and fetch back Absalom. But let him return to his house, and let him not see my face."

Absalom reconciled with his father.

Now Absalom was a youth tall and comely, and excelled all men in the beauty of his person. His hair was long and flowing, and we are told that, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, there was no blemish in him. For two years after his return from Gessur he dwelt at Jerusalem, without once being admitted into his father's presence. Even Joab appears to have avoided him; for when Absalom sent for him to arrange how he might pacify his father, and secure a complete reconciliation with him, he turned a deaf ear to the request. Again Absalom sent, and again Joab refused his petition. But Absalom was not to be thwarted; for he called to him his servants, and bade them go and set fire to a crop of barley

belonging to Joab, which grew in a field adjoining his own. When Joab's servants saw what had been done, they hurried away to their master and informed him of his loss; whereupon he rose up, and coming to Absalom, demanded to know why his servants had acted thus towards him. Absalom answered: "I sent to thee, beseeching thee to come to me, and thou wouldst not; but by this stratagem I have brought thee to me, that I may send thee to the king to say to him: 'Wherefore am I come from Gessur? It had been better for me to be there.' I beseech thee, therefore, that I may see the face of the king: and if he be mindful of my iniquity, let him kill me." Moved with pity by reason of his distress, Joab interceded for him with the king, who refused no longer to be reconciled with him, but presently sent for him, and, in token of his complete forgiveness, gave him the kiss of peace.

CHAPTER LXVII

REVOLT OF ABSALOM AND FLIGHT OF DAVID

Absalom plots against his father.

THE ungrateful Absalom, who looked upon himself as heir to the crown, and whose ambition would not permit him to wait patiently for the death of his father, sought by every means in his power to gain favour with the people, and began secretly to plot how he might dethrone David, and thus deprive him of the kingdom over which God had called him to rule. He gradually surrounded himself with a small body-guard, procured chariots and horsemen, and chose out fifty men to run before him. Early in the morning he would take his station by the city gate; and when those who sought the king's judgment entered, would ask them from what city they came, and what was their case. Then would he assume

the character of a most zealous and disinterested judge, saying: "O that they would make me judge over the land, that all that have business might come to me, and I might do them justice." Moreover, when any man approached to salute him, he took him by the hand and kissed him; and thus did he win the hearts of the men of Israel. When the time was ripe for making a bolder move, he went to the king, and asked for leave to visit Hebron, alleging that when he was in Gessur of Syria he had made this vow: "If the Lord shall bring me again into Jerusalem, I will offer sacrifice to the Lord in Hebron." Pleased, no doubt, with his seeming piety, David readily granted his request and bade him go in peace.

The conspiracy breaks out.

There went with Absalom 200 men of Jerusalem, who as yet were unaware of his design; and when he had arrived at Hebron, he sent spies among all the tribes, warning those whom he had already succeeded in gaining over that, when they heard the sound of the trumpet, they would know that he had already been proclaimed king at Hebron. One of his principal adherents, and the chief mover in the revolt, was Achitophel, the Gilonite, David's trusted counsellor, who, being the grandfather of Bethsabee, had helped to plan the rebellion out of revenge for the wrong done by David to his grand-daughter. From all sides great numbers flocked to Absalom's banner, and before David was aware of any plot against him the conspiracy had come to a head.

Flight of David.

When tidings of the rebellion reached David, he was alarmed for the safety of Jerusalem, and not wishing to expose it to the miseries of a siege, left the city with those of his followers who were still faithful to his cause. Leaving his palace to the care of ten of his concubines, he went out by the eastern gate, accompanied by his trusted servants and many who still remained attached to their royal master. His devoted

guards and the 600 valiant warriors, the Gethites, who had followed him from the time of his flight in the days of Saul, were there also; and although he besought Ethai the Gethite to return with his men to Jerusalem, and to seek his own safety, he nobly replied: "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, in what place soever thou shalt be, either in life or in death, there will thy servant be." David opposed his wishes no more, and proceeding on its way, the mournful band crossed the brook Cedron, and went by the way which led to the desert. Sadoc and Abiathar, and all the Levites with them, came with the Ark, but David bade them return. "Carry back the Ark of God into the city," he said; "if I shall find grace in the sight of the Lord, He will bring me again, and will show me both it and His tabernacle. But if He shall say to me: 'Thou pleasest Me not,' I am ready: let Him do that which is good before Him." Having promised the king that they would keep him informed of all that might happen, they went back into the city, bearing the Ark with them.

Achitophel and Chusai.

But David went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, barefooted and in tears, and all that were with him wept. On learning that Achitophel was among the conspirators, David's grief was increased, and he besought God to render vain the wise counsels of Achitophel, so that they might not be regarded by Absalom. Arrived at the top of Olivet, David turned to take a last parting view of Jerusalem. Here he was met by Chusai, a faithful counsellor, who came to him with his garments rent, and with ashes upon his head, in token of deep mourning. David said to him: "Come not with me, but go back into the city, where thou shalt be as one of Absalom's party, and thus thou shalt defeat the counsels of Achitophel; and whatsoever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, tell it to Sadoc

and Abiathar, the priests." Chusai did as David commanded, and returned to Jerusalem at the time when Absalom himself, with his followers, entered the city.

David met by Siba.

As David began his descent on the opposite side of Olivet, he was met by the servant of the lame Miphiboseth, Siba, to whom had been entrusted the care of the property of Jonathan's son. Coming up to David with two asses laden with loaves and fruit, he besought him to accept the provisions for himself and his followers. David was pleased with the offer, and inquired of him how it fared with his master's son. To this Siba deceitfully replied that he had left Miphiboseth in Jerusalem, where he had stayed in the hope that now at length the time was at hand when Israel would restore to him the kingdom of his father. Without waiting to inquire into the truth of this artful story, which was but a wicked invention, David, in his anger at the supposed treason, bestowed upon Siba all the possessions of his master. Siba dissembled his great joy, and in thanking the king, cunningly intimated that he had not spoken against his master with a view to obtaining the property for himself.

David cursed by Semei.

As David was drawing near to Bahurim, there came out a kinsman of the house of Saul, whose name was Semei. Standing on the hill side, Semei called down curses on the head of the king, and hurled stones at him, so that his followers were compelled to draw closer round him to secure him against fatal injury. When the man saw that he could not harm the king by his missiles, he reviled him the more, exclaiming: "Come out, come out, thou man of blood, and thou man of Belial. The Lord hath repaid thee for all the blood of the house of Saul, and He hath given thy kingdom into the hand of Absalom, thy son: behold thy evils press upon thee, because thou art a man of blood."

Abisai was furious at hearing such words addressed to his royal master, and said to David: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? I will go and cut off his head." But David bade Abisai repress his anger, saying: "Let him alone, and restrain him not; perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and may render me good for the cursing of this day." They then went on their way, and Semei continued to follow them for some distance, cursing, and casting down upon them earth and stones from the hillside. Arrived at the Jordan, David stopped to rest and refresh himself and his weary followers.

CHAPTER LXVIII

DEFEAT AND DEATH OF ABSALOM, B.C. 1023

Absalom enters Jerusalem.

MEANTIME, Absalom, with all his followers, entered Jerusalem, where he was joined by Chusai, who, acting on David's orders, had come to offer his services to the new king. But when Absalom saw Chusai, he spoke chidingly to him, and upbraided him with want of fidelity in having deserted his late master when he most needed his wise counsel. Chusai, however, was equal to the occasion, and replied: "Nay: for I will be his whom the Lord hath chosen, and all this people, and all Israel, and with him will I abide. Besides this, whom shall I serve? Is it not the king's son? As I have served thy father, so will I serve thee also." His words pleased Absalom, who retained him as one of his chief advisers.

Achitophel's advice to Absalom.

Having established himself in the city, Absalom now called to him Achitophel, and asked what he should do next to strengthen his hold on his followers, and to bind them more securely to his interests. Wishing to make the breach between father

and son irrevocable, Achitophel advised Absalom openly to take his father's wives, adding that by such an act the people would believe reconciliation with David to be impossible, and that with the greater ardour would they champion his cause. This wicked counsel prevailed; and thus in Absalom do we see fulfilled the prediction of the prophet Nathan, that what David had done secretly should be done to him in no hidden way, but in the full light of the sun.

Achitophel next proposed that Absalom should give him 12,000 chosen men, and he would set out that very night in pursuit of David, whom he would easily overtake, owing to the wearied state of his followers. When once he had come up with him, he said, there would be no difficulty in defeating him and scattering his men; and when the king had been abandoned by his servants, he would kill him and return in triumph, followed by all the people, who would then be in peace.

usai's advice Absalom.

The recommendation seemed good to Absalom; but he sent for Chusai to ask his opinion on it. Chusai, who was sensible of the danger to which the king would be exposed if it were acted upon, artfully replied: "The counsel that Achitophel hath given this time is not good. Thou knowest thy father, and the men that are with him, that they are very valiant and bitter in their mind, as a bear raging in the wood when her whelps are taken away; and the most valiant man, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall melt for fear. But this seemeth to me to be good counsel: Let all Israel be gathered to thee, from Dan to Bersabee, and thou shalt be in the midst of them. And we shall come upon thy father, and shall cover him as the dew falleth upon the ground." Both Absalom and all his servants acknowledged that the counsel of Chusai was better than that of Achitophel; and thus it happened,

by the will of God, that the wise advice of Achitophel was defeated, that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

Intelligence is sent to David.

In haste, Chusai despatched messengers to Sadoc and Abiathar, the priests, whom he advised to send at once to the king to inform him of Absalom's intention, and to urge him to pass quickly over the Jordan. The messengers chosen were named Jonathan and Achimaas, and these had been stationed by the fountain Rogel, outside the city, where they had been directed to lie concealed, and to be in readiness to convey any tidings of importance from the priests to the king. Under pretence of going to the fountain, a maid was sent to carry the instructions of the priests to the two youths, and thus all suspicion was averted for the moment; but they had not proceeded far on their journey when they were observed by a boy, who hurried into the city, and had Absalom informed of what he had seen. Instant pursuit was made; but the messengers managed to reach Bahurim, where they took shelter in the house of a man well known to them. This man had an empty well in his court, into which he lowered them; while, to secure their hiding-place from detection, his wife spread a covering over the mouth. Scarcely had the well been concealed from view, when the officers sent in pursuit entered the house and demanded the surrender of the youths. The woman answered them: "They are no longer here; they passed on in haste after they had tasted a little water." Annoyed at being thus baffled, the men hastened on. When they had proceeded some distance, Jonathan and Achimaas left their place of concealment, and contrived to deliver their message to David in safety. Not a moment was lost in acting on the information they brought, and before sunrise next morning David and his followers had crossed the river.

hitophel ngs himself.

When Achitophel found that Absalom had preferred the advice of Chusai to his own, seeing destruction ahead, he saddled his ass, and directing his course to his own city, put his house in order and hanged himself.

vid at ahanaim.

Having crossed the Jordan, David took up his position at Mahanaim, a strong city, and the residence of Isboseth at the time when David reigned at Hebron. Here he was visited by the chief men of the surrounding country, who came to him laden with presents, and supplied him with all necessaries in the shape of food and refreshment for himself and his followers.

salom goes pursuit of vid.

Absalom, who had been solemnly anointed king, now got together a vast army, with which he passed over the Jordan, and encamped in the land of Galaad, not far from Mahanaim. He appointed Amasa as commander-in-chief in place of Joab, and forthwith marched against David. On receiving news of Absalom's approach, David determined not to wait to be attacked, but immediately proceeded to divide his men into three companies, one of which he placed under the command of Joab, the second under Abisai, and the third under Ethai. He himself proposed to march out along with them, but the people cried out: "Thou shalt not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not mind us; or if half of us should fall, they will not greatly care; for thou alone art accounted for ten thousand. It is better, therefore, that thou shouldst be in the city to succour us." Yielding to their wishes, David took up his post at the gate of the city, and as his men passed out to do battle, he charged their captains, in the hearing of all, to save the life of Absalom.

The opposing forces were not long in coming in sight of each other, and soon a fierce battle was raging in

the forest of Ephraim. Although the army of Absalon greatly outnumbered that of his father, ye was it no match for the superior dis cipline of David's trained forces. The skill o the latter soon began to tell, and presently Absalom' followers were driven back and put to rout. Th slaughter was immense; and, to escape capture, Absalon himself was compelled to flee from the battle, mounted o a mule. His path lay through the forest; and as h hastened along, closely pursued by a party of David' men, his head was caught between the branches of an oak and his flowing locks also becoming entangled, he wa dragged from the back of his mule and left suspended The first who came up with him, remembering David' command, spared his life, and returned to inform Joa of what he had seen. Joab hastened to the spot, an regardless of the king's expressed wish, took three lance and with them pierced the heart of the ungrateful Ab salom; then calling upon his armour-bearers, he bad them finish the deed. The body was then taken down an cast into a pit, over which was piled a great heap of stone Now that the rebel leader was dead, Joab ordered th trumpet to be sounded for the recall of his men, as h was desirous of sparing further bloodshed.

Defeat and death of Absalom.

How great was the contrast between Absalom's buria mound and the splendid monument he ha raised to perpetuate his own name; for whe his sons were all dead, he had caused a loft pillar to be erected in *The King's Valley*, saying: "I hav no son, and this shall be the monument of my name."

Absalom's pillar.

As David sat between the two gates of the city, th watchman on the wall above announced tha he saw a man running in their direction. Th king said: "If he be alone, there are goo tidings in his mouth." Hardly had David spoken the

David's lament for Absalom.

words when the watchman cried out that he saw a second man running alone. Again David said: "He also is a good messenger." Soon the first messenger, who was none other than Achimaas, the son of Sadoc, came up, and falling down before the king, said: "God save thee, O king: blessed be the Lord thy God, who hath shut up the men that have lifted up their hands against my lord the king." On David's inquiring if Absalom was safe, Achimaas continued: "I saw a great tumult, O king, when thy servant Joab sent me: I know nothing else." By this time the second messenger, who had now come up, bowed before David and said: "I bring good tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath judged for thee this day from the hand of all that have risen up against thee." But David asked: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger answered: "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against him unto evil, be as the young man is." On hearing these words, David's countenance fell, and he was much moved; then going to the high chamber over the gate, he wept, murmuring aloud: "My son, Absalom; Absalom, my son: would to God that I might die for thee, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom."

's displ sure.

When it was told to Joab that the king wept and lamented for his son, and that by reason of his grief the victory was turned into mourning, he hastened into David's presence and reproached him, exclaiming: "Thou lovest them that hate thee, and hatest them that love thee; and thou hast showed this day that thou carest not for thy nobles, nor for thy servants. I now plainly perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had been slain, then it would have pleased thee. Now, therefore, arise, and go out and speak to the satisfaction of thy servants, for I swear to thee by the Lord that if thou wilt not go forth there will not

tarry with thee so much as one this night." David arose and casting aside all external marks of grief, again sat in the gate of the city, where the people came together and saluted him.

CHAPTER LXIX

DAVID'S RETURN—NEW REBELLION

By the death of Absalom an end was put to the rebellion. But now confusion reigned among the tribes till, calling to mind the benefits conferred upon them by David, they said: "The king delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, and he saved us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in the battle: how long are you silent, and bring not back the king?" When such sayings as these had reached the ears of David, he called to him Sadoc and Abiathar, the High-priests, and requested them to appeal to the rulers of the tribe of Juda, and say to them: "Why are you the last to bring back the king to his house? You are my brethren; you are my bone and my flesh." At the same time he promised to make Amasa commander-in-chief in place of Joab, whose insolence had made him insupportable.

The end of the rebellion.

On hearing David's message, the hearts of the men of Juda were completely won, and they invited him to return. Moreover, to welcome him they went forth as far as Galgal to meet him and came back with him in triumph. When Semei, who had cursed David in his adversity, saw him once more restored to his throne, he was eager to regain favor with him, and came out with a thousand men of the tribe of Benjamin to welcome him. Siba also, the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants

David's return to Jerusalem.

passed the fords of the Jordan, that they might help the king and all his household to cross. Hardly had the king arrived at the opposite bank, when Semei, hastening towards him, fell down before him and said: "Impute not to me, my lord, the iniquity, nor remember the injuries of thy servant on the day that thou wentest out of Jerusalem, nor lay it up in thy heart, O king." When Abisai, who was standing beside the king, heard these words, he was filled with anger, and would have had David slay Semei for having cursed the Lord's anointed. But David rebuked him, saying: "Why are you a satan this day to me? Shall there any man be killed this day in Israel?" Then turning to Semei, he bade him fear not, and promised to spare his life.

rzellai, the laadite.

It was at the Jordan that David took leave of Berzellai, the Galaadite, a good and rich man, who had supplied his wants when at Mahanaim, and had conducted him as far as the Jordan. In answer to David's request that he would accompany him to Jerusalem and remain always beside him, that he might reward him for his hospitality, Berzellai said: "I am this day fourscore years old; are my senses quick to discern sweet and bitter? Or can meat or drink delight thy servant? Or can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women? Why should thy servant be a burden to my lord the king? I beseech thee let thy servant return, and die in my own city, and be buried by the sepulchre of my father and of my mother." David urged him no further, but asked that at all events he would allow his son to go with him, and upon him would he heap many and great honours. To this the good old man consented; upon which David kissed him and blessed him, and bade him return in peace to his home.

The next after Semei to meet David was Miphiboseth, the son of his friend Jonathan. Since David's departure from

Jerusalem, Miphiboseth had not trimmed his beard nor washed his garments, and with every sign of grief and sorrow he now came forth to demand justice against the wicked Siba, who had so unjustly calumniated him to the king. On David's inquiring why he had not left Jerusalem and accompanied him in his flight, he replied: "My lord, my servant despised me. I spoke to him to saddle me an ass, that I might get on and go with the king; for I thy servant am lame. Moreover, he hath also accused me to thee: but do thou what pleaseth thee, for since thou hast set me, thy servant, among the guests of thy table, what just complaint have I, or what right to cry any more to the king?" David listened to his story, and said that, as he had not come along with him, he had given his possessions to Siba, but that Siba must now share the property with him. Miphiboseth answered: "Yea, let him take all, for as much as my lord the king is returned peaceably into his house."

Miphiboseth meets David.

David's triumphant return was not without its bitterness; for having arrived at Galgal, accompanied by the whole tribe of Juda, and only half of the people of Israel, feelings of jealousy began to rise in the breasts of the latter, on account of Juda's having done what ought to have been done conjointly by all. Going up to the king, they asked menacingly: "Why have our brethren, the men of Juda, stolen thee away, and have brought the king and his household over the Jordan?" The men of Juda answered: "Because the king is nearer to us. Why are you angry for this matter? Have we eaten anything of the king's, or have any gifts been given us?"

Discord between Juda and Israel.

The contention grew more and more fierce, and was at length brought to a climax by a lawless man named Seba, of the tribe of Benjamin, who sounded the trumpet of revolt, and cried out "We have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son

Seba's rebellion.

of Isai: return to thy dwellings, O Israel." Immediately all Israel departed from David, but the men of Juda clung to their king and conducted him in safety to Jerusalem. Arrived there, David at once set to work to stamp out this new rebellion; and calling to him his captain, Amasa, he bade him assemble all the men of Juda and return to him on the third day. But Amasa was slow in carrying out the king's commands, and for fear the insurgents might gain advantage from the delay, David sent for Abisai and said to him: "Now will Seba do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou, therefore, the servants of thy lord, and pursue him, lest he find fenced cities and escape us."

Accordingly, Abisai, accompanied by his brother Joab, set out with the royal body-guard, and all the most valiant men of Jerusalem, in pursuit of Seba, and when they were come to the "Great Stone" in Gabaon, where Abner and Joab had formerly joined battle, they were met by Amasa. Suspecting no evil, Amasa came forward to salute Joab, who, pretending the greatest friendship for his rival, returned the salute; but as he was in the act of embracing Amasa, he plunged his sword into his side and killed him.

asa is slain Joab.

After the dead body had been removed from the road and carried into an adjoining field, the pursuit of Seba was continued. Coming up with him at Abela, a strong city, into which he had withdrawn with his followers, Joab immediately laid siege to the place. Having thrown up works round the city, he proceeded both to undermine the walls, and to pull them down by means of hooks and ropes. The inhabitants now began to fear for their own safety, when a woman, taking her stand on the fortifications, called for Joab. Asked by him what she wanted, she thus made answer: Hear the words of thy handmaid. Thou seekest to

th of Seba.

destroy the city, and to overthrow it. Why wilt thou throw down the inheritance of the Lord?" Joab replied: "God forbid that I should. The matter is not so, but a man of Mount Ephraim, Seba by name, hath lifted up his hand against king David: deliver him only, and we will depart from the city." Promising to comply with his request, the woman withdrew. After she had made known Joab's answer in the city, the people rose up against Seba, put him to death, and cast his head over the wall. Joab thereupon sounded the trumpet of recall, raised the siege, and returned without delay to Jerusalem. By the removal of Amasa, Joab again obtained command of the army of Israel.

CHAPTER LXX

THREE YEARS' FAMINE—THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE, B.C. 1017

The famine.

With the suppression of Seba's revolt begins the third and last period of the reign of David. Even yet, unbroken peace was not to be his lot, but fresh troubles soon began to come upon him. A grievous famine, with all its attendant miseries, fell upon the land, and for three years the people suffered terrible want. Filled with grief, David besought the Lord for mercy, and prayed that He would discover to him the cause of the chastisement, and how it might be averted. Having received the answer that these miseries had come upon Israel in punishment of Saul's sin in having slain the Gabaonites, David sent for the principal men among the Gabaonites, and asked what they would have him do, and what atonement they required at his hands. They said to him, "We have no contest about silver and gold, but against Saul and against his house; neither do we desire that of the

rest of Israel any man be slain. The man that crushed us and oppressed us unjustly we must destroy: therefore, let seven men of his children be delivered unto us, that we may crucify them in Gabaa of Saul, once the chosen of the Lord." David complied with their demand, and delivered up to them the two sons of Saul and Respha, together with the five sons of Merob, Saul's daughter; but, by reason of the oath which he had taken to protect the sons of Jonathan, he spared Miphiboseth and his son Micha. The seven were taken straightway and crucified on a hill in Gabaa, and all of them died together in the first days of the harvest, when the barley began to be reaped. The famine had been caused by drought; but now, rain began to fall in plenty, from which circumstance David was assured that at length God was appeased.

spha's care the dead.

As the bodies hung upon the gibbet they were guarded most affectionately by Respha, who suffered neither the birds to tear them by day nor the beasts by night. When David heard of her devoted care for her dead sons, he was touched with pity, and had their bones reverently buried, together with those of Saul and of Jonathan, in the sepulchre of Cis, in the land of Benjamin.

ar with the ilistines.

Soon afterwards the king made war against the Philistines, and it chanced that, while pursuing the enemy, he got separated from his followers. Suddenly, when faint from much exertion, he was set upon by a giant Philistine, and would have been slain had not Abisai suddenly appeared upon the scene. Throwing himself between the king and his assailant, Abisai succeeded in running the Philistine through the body with his sword, and thus saved the life of his sovereign. When it became known to how great a danger the king had been exposed, the people began to grow uneasy for his safety, and gathering about him, they

solemnly swore: "Thou shalt go no more with us to battle, lest thou put out the lamp of Israel."

The Philistine champion.

Three times more did the Israelites fight against the Philistines. Moreover, it was in this final struggle with their old enemy that a trial of strength was made by a champion from either army. There was in the Philistine camp a man of gigantic stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. Coming out before the Israelites, this monster spoke boastfully, and reproached them with their want of courage. Just as on a similar occasion David had gone forth single-handed against Goliath, so now Jonathan, the son of Samaa, the brother of David, advanced to meet this new terror, and won for himself great renown by overthrowing and slaying him.

The numbering of the people.

Vanity was the cause of David's second fall, by which he so much displeased God. His sin probably involved a secret confidence in his power and riches without any reference to God, or entire trust in Him. Wishing to know the number of his subjects, he bade Joab go through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Bersabee, and take a general census of the people. But Joab resisted his design, and said: "The Lord thy God increase thy people, and make them as many more as they are now, and again multiply them a hundred fold. But what meaneth my lord the king by this kind of thing?" David's commands, however, prevailed; and Joab and the captains of the army proceeded to number the people of Israel.

David's remorse.

After nine months and twenty days they returned to Jerusalem with the report that of Israel there were 800,000 fighting men, while those of Juda numbered 500,000. But scarcely had the king thus satisfied his vanity, when he was struck with remorse for his sinful folly, and calling on the Lord

said: "I have sinned very much in what I have done; but I pray Thee, O Lord, to take away the iniquity of Thy servant, because I have done exceedingly foolishly."

Already was punishment at the door; for early in the morning following Joab's return, God sent the prophet Gad to the king to make known His anger, and to propose to him the choice of three things: "Seven years of famine," said he, "shall come upon thee in thy land; or thou shalt flee three months before thy adversaries, and they shall pursue thee; or for three days there shall be a pestilence in thy land. Now, therefore, deliberate and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me." David replied: "I am in a great strait; but it is better that I should fall into the hands of the Lord (for His mercies are many) than into the hands of men." Then the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and from Dan to Bersabee there died 70,000 men. When David saw the destruction wrought among his people, he cried out to the Lord: "It is I, I am he that have sinned; I have done wickedly: these that are the sheep, what have they done? Let Thy hand, I beseech Thee, be turned against me and against my father's house." God was moved by his prayer, and the angel of death was commanded to stay his hand when near the threshing-floor of Areuna, the Jebusite. Again Gad appeared before David and bade him go up immediately to Areuna, and there build an altar to God. David proceeded to obey the command forthwith; and when Areuna saw the king and his servants coming towards him, he went out, and falling down before David, said: 'Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant?" David replied: "To buy the threshing-floor of thee, and to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague which rageth among the people may cease." To this, Areuna made answer:

e three days' stilence.

"Let my lord the king take and offer as it seemeth good to him: thou hast here oxen for a holocaust, and the wain, and the yokes of the oxen for wood." "Nay," rejoined David, "but I will buy it of thee at a price, and I will not offer to the Lord my God holocausts free-cost." So David bought the floor and the oxen for fifty sicles of silver, and offered holocausts and peace-offerings; and the Lord became merciful to the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

In the above account of David's sin and its punishment how clearly we have presented to us *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction*, temporal sufferings being inflicted even after the sin has been forgiven.

THE THIRD BOOK OF KINGS

This and the following Book are called by the Fathers the Third and Fourth Books of Kings, but by the Hebrews the First and Second. They contain the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Juda, from the beginning of the reign of Solomon to the Captivity, and probably were written not by one man, nor at one time; but, as there was through all this period a succession of prophets in Israel who recorded, by Divine inspiration, the most remarkable things that happened in their days, these Books seem to have been written by them.

CHAPTER LXXI

CONSPIRACY OF ADONIAS—DEATH OF DAVID, B.C. 1015

To attend him in his old age, and to minister to all his wants, David married the beautiful Abisag, who nursed him and comforted him up to the day of his death.

Abisag.

The latter days of the king were not undisturbed by domestic troubles, for Adonias, the son of David and

ot of Adonias.

Haggith, who on the death of Absalom was the eldest surviving son, resolved to have himself proclaimed king. As Absalom had done before him, he got together chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him, and even succeeded in winning to his party the High Priest Abiathar, and Joab the commander-in-chief. But Sadoc and Nathan, and Banaias the captain of the body-guard, and David's most valiant men, remained faithful. When the conspiracy was fast coming to a head, Adonias made a great feast, to which he invited all the king's sons, except Solomon, and all the chief men of Juda; and as they were eating and drinking before him, they cried out: "God save king Adonias!"

e conspiracy nade known David.

Meanwhile Nathan, the prophet, went to Bethsabee, the mother of Solomon, and said to her: "Hast thou not heard that Adonias, the son of Haggith, reigneth, and our lord David knoweth it not? Now, then, come, take my counsel, and save thy life, and the life of thy son Solomon. Go, and get thee to king David, and say to him: 'Didst thou not swear to me, thy handmaid, saying, Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne? Why, then, doth Adonias reign?' And while thou art yet speaking there with the king, I will come in after thee, and will fill up thy words." Bethsabee faithfully carried out the instructions of the prophet; and while she was yet speaking with David, Nathan himself entered and confirmed her story regarding the choice of Adonias by Joab and so many of his chief men, and asked whether it was with his consent that he had been elected to reign after him. On Nathan's entering, Bethsabee had withdrawn, but David had her recalled immediately, and said to her: "Even as I swore to thee by the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, 'Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead,' so will I do this day."

Solomon is anointed.

The king then summoned Sadoc, the High Priest, together with Nathan and Banaias, and bade them take Solomon to Gihon, where they were to anoint him. Having placed him upon a mule, they conducted him to Gihon; and there, to the great joy of the people, Sadoc took a horn of oil out of the Tabernacle and anointed him. The trumpet was sounded and Solomon was proclaimed king, all the people crying out: "God save king Solomon!"

End of the conspiracy.

Hearing the sound of the trumpet, Joab said to Adonias and to those that were seated with him at the banquet: "What meaneth this noise of the city in an uproar?" But before he could receive an answer, there hurried into their presence Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, who was welcomed by Adonias as the bearer of good news. Jonathan, however, soon undeceived him by telling him that Solomon had already been anointed king, and that all the city rang with shouts of joy and acclamation. The guests of Adonias were filled with consternation by the sudden and unexpected news, and straightway dispersed, each to his own home. Adonias himself, alarmed for his own safety, fled for refuge to the altar, and taking hold of the horns thereof, refused to leave till he had received Solomon's promise of pardon and security. This was granted, Solomon pledging his word that if he abstained from further wrong-doing not a hair of his head should be injured.

David's charge to Solomon.

Knowing that his end was fast approaching, David called Solomon to his side and said: "My son, it was my desire to have built a house to the name of the Lord my God, but the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 'Thou hast shed much blood and fought many battles; thou canst not, therefore, build a house to My name: but a son that shall be born to thee shall be a most quiet man; he shall be called

Peaceable (*Solomon*), and I will give peace and quietness to Israel all his days. He shall build a house to My name, and he shall be a son to Me, and I will be a Father to him; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.' Now, then, my son, the Lord be with thee, and do thou prosper, and build the house to the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken of thee. The Lord also give thee wisdom and understanding, that thou mayest be able to rule Israel, and to keep the law of the Lord thy God. For then thou shalt be able to prosper, if thou keep the commandments and judgments which the Lord commanded Moses to teach Israel."

Then, after he had committed to his care the materials which he had gathered together for the construction of the Temple, and the vast sums of gold and silver which he had amassed for the same purpose, and after seeing him once more solemnly anointed in presence of all the people, David, the son of Isai, went the way of all flesh, and was buried in his own city. He had reigned over Israel forty years—in Hebron seven, and in Jerusalem three-and-thirty years.

ath of David.

Thus died, in his seventieth year, this great saint, this perfect model of princes. In his life he prefigured our Lord in a wonderful manner: in his birth at the same city; in his persecutions and subsequent glory. Abandoned by his friends, David had to fly from Jerusalem; our Lord, too, betrayed by a false friend, was obliged to go out of Jerusalem laden with a cross.

vid a figure our Saviour.

The Psalms, which were in great part composed by David, during that period of his history comprised in the First and Second Books of Kings, have been a source of consolation and instruction beyond any other part of the Hebrew Scriptures. They mirror their author's very nature, and

Psalms of vid.

unfold to us the true knowledge of him as a man, and as a servant of God. He fell into sin through human frailty, but the magnitude of his falls served to display the wonderful depth of his repentance. A careful perusal of the Psalms, remembering the circumstances under which each was written, is necessary to enable us fully to appreciate the saintliness of David's character. In them he breaks forth into the most earnest strains in which the human heart has ever poured itself out in the sight of God; they give us "the truest emblem of a man's moral progress and warfare here below."

By referring to Appendix I. it will be seen that many of the Psalms bear a Messianic character, and show how David, who was a type of Christ in his own life, was able in prophetic spirit to describe so clearly the sufferings and the glory of his Divine Antitype; for example, in Psalm xxi. we have a vivid description of Christ's sufferings, culminating in the words: "They have dug My hands and My feet; they have numbered all My bones." In Psalm cix., on the other hand, we have a picture of the triumph and exaltation of our Saviour. In other Psalms, which are not considered directly, but only typically Messianic, David is inspired, in describing his own fate, to use expressions which, though figuratively referring to himself, in their literal signification describe incidents in the life of Christ—as, for example, in Psalm lxviii. 21, 22.

CHAPTER LXXII

SOLOMON SOLE KING OVER ISRAEL, B.C. 1015

Joab and Semei to be punished.

SHORTLY before his death David had reminded Solomon of Joab's conduct in regard to the two captains of the army of Israel, Abner and Amasa, whom he had slain, and directed him to see that just punishment was inflicted upon the murderer.

He also bade him punish Semei, who, at the time of his flight, had uttered such grievous curses against him, but to hold in great honour and to show kindness to the sons of Berzellai, the Galaadite, and to let them eat at his table, because they had met him when he fled from the face of Absalom.

Adonias put to death.

Scarcely had Solomon ascended the throne of his father David, when the conduct of Adonias made it evident that he still entertained the ambitious design of securing the crown for himself. Going to Bethsabee, he besought her to beg Solomon to grant him in marriage the beautiful Abisag, whom David had married shortly before his death. When Bethsabee made known to Solomon the request of his brother, believing that Adonias aimed at greater things, he was filled with anger, and said to her: "Why dost thou ask Abisag for Adonias? Ask for him also the kingdom, for he is my elder brother, and hath with him Abiathar, the priest, and Joab, the captain of the host. As the Lord liveth, who hath established me, and placed me upon the throne of David, my father, Adonias shall die this day." He then summoned Banaias, the captain of the guards, and ordered him to put Adonias to death.

Abiathar banished.

Solomon next sent for Abiathar, the priest, and said to him: "Go to Anathoth, to thy own lands, for indeed thou art worthy of death; but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou didst carry the Ark of the Lord God before David, my father, and hast endured trouble in all the troubles my father endured." Thus did Solomon cast out Abiathar from being the priest of the Lord, that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled which He spoke concerning the house of Heli in Silo.

As soon as news came to Joab that Adonias had been

slain and Abiathar deposed, he became alarmed for his own safety, by reason of the part he himself had taken against Solomon, and immediately fled for refuge to the altar. As he refused to come forth, he was there slain at the foot of the altar by Banaias, and was buried in his own house in the desert. Banaias was chosen to succeed him as commander-in-chief, and Sadoc was made High Priest in place of Abiathar.

Joab is slain.

The king next sent for Semei and said to him: "Build thee a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not out from thence anywhere; for on what day soever thou shalt go out, and shalt pass over the brook Cedron, know that thou shalt be put to death; thy blood be upon thy own head." Semei answered: "The saying is good; as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do." He accordingly removed with all his effects, and abode in Jerusalem. Now it chanced that, after three years' time, two of Semei's servants having fled to Geth, Semei himself set out in pursuit with a number of attendants, and succeeded in bringing them back; but when it came to the ears of the king that Semei had thus transgressed his command, he called him and said: "Why hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord, and the commandment that I laid upon thee? Thou knowest all the evil of which thy heart is conscious, which thou didst to David, my father: the Lord hath returned thy wickedness upon thy own head." Then calling Banaias, he bade him lead Semei away and put him to death.

Semei put to death.

Solomon was now firmly established upon the throne, and, after the death of Adonias, had no rival to dispute his claim. Having brought his enemies to punishment, he next sought to strengthen his power by alliances with two of the most influential princes on his borders—Pharao, king

Solomon marries Pharao's daughter.

of Egypt, whose daughter he married, and Hiram, king of Tyre, with whom he ever lived on terms of the closest friendship. And we read that Solomon loved the Lord, and walked in the precepts of David, his father.

olomon's oice of isdom.

It was about this time that Solomon resolved to go to Gabaon to offer sacrifice. In the midst of a great assembly he offered up a thousand victims, and in the following night the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee." To this, Solomon humbly answered: "O Lord God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David, my father: I am but a child, and know not how to go out and come in; and Thy servant is in the midst of an immense people which Thou hast chosen. Give, therefore, to Thy servant an understanding heart, to judge Thy people, and discern between good and evil. For who shall be able to judge this people, Thy people, which is so numerous?" God was well pleased with his petition, and said to him: "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked for thyself wisdom, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, in so much that there hath been no one like unto thee before, nor shall arise after thee. Yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask I have given unto thee, namely, riches and glory; so that no king hath ever been like unto thee before." Thus assured of the Divine favour and protection, Solomon returned to Jerusalem, and having offered holocausts and sacrificed peace-offerings, he made a great feast for all his servants.

A remarkable instance of the king's wisdom was displayed in the judgment pronounced by him in the case of two women who appeared before him to have a dispute settled. They both dwelt in the same house, and each

had an infant son whose ages differed but by three days.

Solomon's judgment.

"This woman and I," said one of them to the king, "dwell together in the same house, and have each had a child; but her child died in the night, for in her sleep she overlaid it. Then, rising in the dead of the night, she took my child from my side while I was asleep, and laid it in her bosom, leaving her dead son in my arms. Now, when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead; but regarding it more closely, when it was clear day, I found it was not mine." Hereupon the other woman exclaimed: "It is not as thou sayest, but thy child is dead, and mine is alive." "No," said the first, "on the contrary it is thou that liest, for my child liveth, and thine is dead." And thus they continued to dispute before the king. Then Solomon said to one of his attendants: "Bring me a sword." When this was done, he gave orders for the living child to be divided in two, and half to be given to the one woman and half to the other. But she who was the real mother of the living child cried out in alarm: "I beseech thee, my lord, give her the child alive, and do not kill it." But the other said: "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." The king answered: "Give the child to her that cried out to save it, and let it be not killed, for she is the mother thereof." And all Israel heard of the judgment, and they feared the king, seeing that the wisdom of God was in him.

The wisdom of Solomon surpassed that of all the Orientals and of the Egyptians, and he was renowned among all the nations round about. He spoke 3,000 parables, and his poems were 1,005. These works are all lost, except some part of the parables extant in the Book of Proverbs, and his chief poem, called the "Canticle of Canticles." He, moreover, treated of trees, "from the cedar that is in Libanus to the hysso-

Solomon's fame.

that cometh out of the wall," besides discoursing of beasts and of fowls, of creeping things and of fishes. His fame reached to kingdoms most remote, and there came men of all nations to hear his wisdom.

Extent of Solomon's kingdom.

Juda and Israel had by this time grown to be exceedingly numerous, and under the rule of Solomon enjoyed perfect tranquillity. They dwelt without fear, "every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan to Bersabee," and peace reigned throughout the land. The kingdom of Israel now embraced all that had been promised to Abraham; and Solomon had under him all the kingdoms from the river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt. He was surrounded by a retinue of princes and courtiers so numerous that, as we read, the provisions for each day consisted of thirty measures of fine flour and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen and twenty out of the pastures, and a hundred rams, besides venison and fatted fowls. He had 40,000 stalls of chariot horses, and 12,000 for the saddle; and for these, twelve of the king's officers were appointed to furnish corn and straw, besides having to supply the necessaries for the king's table.

Hiram, king of Tyre.

Among those who came to congratulate Solomon on his elevation to the throne were the ambassadors of Hiram, king of Tyre. In replying to this friendly greeting Solomon took occasion to set before Hiram his present prosperity, and to make known to him his intention of erecting a Temple to the name of the Lord God. He, moreover, made this request of him: "Give orders that thy servants cut me down cedar-trees out of Libanus, and let thy servants be with my servants, and I will give them their hire whatsoever thou wilt ask; for thou knowest how there is not among my people a man that has skill to hew wood like to the Sidonians."

Preparations for building the Temple.

Hiram rejoiced exceedingly on hearing Solomon's message, and made this reply: "I will do all thy desire concerning cedar-trees and fir-trees. I will put them together in floats on the sea, and convey them to the place which thou shalt signify to me, and will land them there, and thou shalt receive them; and thou shalt allow me necessaries to furnish food for my household." Solomon gladly complied with this condition, and every year allowed Hiram 20,000 measures of wheat and 20 measures of the purest oil. Workmen were then chosen out of all Israel, to the number of 30,000, and these were sent to Mount Libanus, 10,000 every month by turns; so that for each month they worked in the forest, they remained two months at home. In addition to these, 70,000 were employed as porters, and 80,000 were set apart to hew and prepare stone in the quarries, while other 3,600 were appointed as overseers; so that the number of those engaged in the above-named works reached the enormous total of 183,600 men.

CHAPTER LXXIII

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, B.C. 1012

After upwards of three years' preparation, the building of the Temple was begun, in the 480th year after the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, and in the fourth year of the reign of king Solomon. So exactly had the materials been prepared that, as the huge structure rose up, no sound of hammer nor axe, nor of any iron tool, was heard; but there, on the very spot upon Mount Moria which David himself had chosen, "like some tall palm the noiseless fabric grew." In seven and a half years the stupendous structure was completed. The rugged top of Moria was levelled to

The Temple begun.

allow space sufficient for the purpose; and thus the Temple was founded upon a rock, and became an emblem of the perpetuity of the true religion which has subsisted from the beginning of the world.

The Courts of the Temple.

The whole area of the Temple was enclosed by an outer wall forming a quadrangle, within which was an open court, afterwards known as the *Court of the Gentiles*. Within this, on a higher level, was a smaller enclosure called the *Court of the Israelites*. And within this, again, on a still higher level, was a third enclosure, the *Court of the Priests*.

The outermost court was entered by four gates, looking respectively to north, south, east, and west. The middle court was likewise reached by four gates which led from the Court of the Gentiles, and which were approached in each case by a flight of seven steps. The third enclosure, owing to its being, as we have seen, on a still higher level, was entered by flights of eight steps. In it, however, there were only three gates, which faced respectively north, south, and east; for against its western wall stood the central portion of the entire structure—the Temple itself.

The Temple itself.

The actual Temple was built on the model of the Tabernacle, but in most of its dimensions was twice the size, measuring 60 cubits by 20, though its height was only 30 cubits. It was built of stone and consisted of three parts, the *Porch*, the *Holy Place*, and the *Holy of Holies*.

The Porch.

The *Porch* was 10 cubits deep and 20 cubits wide, thus extending the full width of the building. Either within this porch, or supporting it in front, were two great brazen pillars, the one called *Jachin* (*durability*), the other *Booz* (*strength*).

The *Holy Place* was 40 cubits long, 20 wide, and 30 high. The interior was lined with cedar, richly carved,

and overlaid with gold, so that no stone-work was visible.

The Holy Place.

Here stood the *Altar of Incense*, made of cedar-wood covered with the purest gold; the *Golden Table*, upon which the Loaves of Proposition were to be set; and the *Golden Candlesticks*, five on the right hand and five on the left.

The Holy of Holies.

The *Holy of Holies* stood at the western end of the building, and was in the shape of a cube 20 cubits each way. Separating it from the Holy Place were folding doors of olive wood, beautifully carved with figures of cherubim and palm-trees, and overlaid with gold; while before the entrance hung a sumptuous veil richly embroidered in violet, purple, and scarlet, with figures of cherubim wrought in it. In the midst of the Holy of Holies rested the Ark of the Covenant, overshadowed by two colossal cherubim, made of olive wood, and overlaid with gold. They stood facing each other with wings extended, so that one wing of each met over the Ark, while the other stretched to the wall of the Temple.

The Court of the Priests.

In the Court of the Priests was a new *Altar of Holocausts*, much larger than that of Moses. It was made entirely of brass, and was 20 cubits long and broad, and 10 high. There was also in it the great *Brazen Laver* or *Sea*, 5 cubits high and 30 cubits in circumference. This was for the ablution of the priests, and was supported on twelve oxen of brass, three of which looked towards the north, three towards the south, three towards the east, and three towards the west. In addition to the great Laver, ten smaller ones, five on the right hand and five on the left, served for the ablution of the burnt-offerings: these rested on bases curiously wrought and ornamented with figures of lions, oxen, and cherubim.

At length, in the year B.C. 1004, the Temple was

completed, and everything was put in order for the solemn dedication. Thereupon Solomon gathered together in Jerusalem the ancients of Israel, and all the princes of the tribes, and the heads of the families of the children of Israel, to remove the Ark containing the Tables of the Law, in solemn procession, from the city of David to the abode prepared for it in the Holy of Holies. When all were assembled, and after the priests had reverently taken up the Ark, and the Levites had raised aloft the vessels of the sanctuary that were in the Tabernacle, the whole body began to move forward towards the new Temple. Solomon himself walked in procession before the Ark, which was borne by the priests into the oracle of the Temple, into the Holy of Holies, and set down under the wings of the cherubim.

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1004.

As the priests retired from the Sanctuary, or Holy Place, the Levites and the singing-men, under Asaph, Heman, and Idithun, began to play upon their cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, while at the same time a hundred and twenty priests sounded their trumpets. The air resounded with the music of the instruments; and at the very moment when the voices of the singers were raised in those words of praise, *Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever*, the House of God was filled with a cloud, nor could the priests stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the House of God. Then was heard the voice of Solomon, saying: "The Lord promised that He would dwell in a cloud, but I have built a house to His name, that He might dwell there for ever." He next turned his face towards the people, and from the brazen throne which he had set up in the midst of the Temple, before the Altar of the Lord, he blessed all the multitude of Israel. Then kneeling down, and lifting up his hands towards heaven, he poured forth this

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sublime prayer: "O Lord God of Israel, there is no god like Thee in heaven nor in earth: who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their hearts: who hast performed to Thy servant David my father, all that Thou hast promised him. Is it credible then, that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built! But to this end only is it made, that Thou mayest regard the prayer of Thy servant and his supplication, O Lord, my God, and mayest hear the prayers which Thy servant poureth out before Thee. Hearken, then, to the prayers of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel. Whosoever shall pray in this place, hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place, that is, from heaven, and show mercy. If Thy people Israel be overcome by their enemies (for they will sin against Thee), and being converted, shall do penance, and call upon Thy name, and pray to Thee in this place, then hear Thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them back into the land which Thou gavest them and their fathers. If the heavens be shut up, and there fall no rain by reason of the sins of the people, and they shall pray to Thee in this place, and confess to Thy name, and be converted from their sins when Thou dost afflict them, then hear Thou from heaven, O Lord, and forgive the sins of Thy servants, and teach them the good way, in which they may walk, and give rain to Thy land which Thou hast given Thy people to possess. Do Thou render to every one according to his ways, which Thou knowest him to have in his heart (for Thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men). If the stranger also, who is not of Thy people Israel, come from a far country, for the sake of Thy great name, and Thy strong hand, and Thy stretched out arm, and adore in this place, hear Thou from heaven Thy firm dwelling-place, and do all that which that stranger

shall call upon Thee for, that all the people of the earth may know Thy name, and may fear Thee. And if Thy people sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them up to their enemies, and they lead them away captive, and if they be converted in their heart in the land to which they were led captive, and do penance, and pray to Thee in the land of their captivity, *and adore Thee towards the way of their own land, and the house which I have built to Thy name*, then hear Thou from heaven their prayers, and forgive Thy people, although they have sinned: for Thou art my God. Let Thy eyes, I beseech Thee, be open, and let Thy ears be attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into Thy resting-place, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength: let Thy priests put on salvation, and Thy saints rejoice in good things."

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rifices.

No sooner had Solomon concluded his prayer than fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocausts and the victims; and the majesty of the Lord filled the Temple. Upon this, all the assembly fell down with their faces to the ground, and adored and praised the Lord.

The feast of the dedication was continued for fourteen days, during which 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were offered in sacrifice. The people were then dismissed to their own homes, joyful and glad for the good that the Lord had done to David, and to Solomon, and to all Israel, His people.

In those words of Solomon's prayer to which attention has been drawn by the use of italics we find the origin of the custom of turning towards Jerusalem and the Temple, when, in whatever country they might be sojourning, the Jews poured forth their supplications.

CHAPTER LXXIV

SOLOMON'S GREATNESS AND MAGNIFICENCE

Solomon's palace.

Solomon next erected for himself, on a scale of great splendour, a palace near the Temple, which was thirteen years in building. His chief architect, both in this undertaking and in the building of the Temple, was Hiram, the son of a widow of the tribe of Nephtali and of a Tyrian father, noted for his skill in all manner of work in brass. Hiram had inherited his father's skill, and displayed his wonderful art in all kinds of work, but particularly in designing in gold, silver, and brass. The palace consisted of a number of magnificent buildings, the principal of which was the *House of the Forest of Libanus*—so called on account of its many cedar pillars brought from Libanus, and perhaps, too, by reason of the many trees and shrubs planted in its vicinity. Next came the *Porch of the Throne*, wherein was the seat of judgment; then the *Porch of Pillars*, a court surrounded by pillars and galleries, in front of the palace proper. Adjoining the Porch of the Throne was erected a palace for Pharao's daughter; and when this was completed she was conducted to it in state from the city of David, for the king said: "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, for it is sanctified, because the Ark of the Lord came into it."

God appears a second time to Solomon.

When Solomon's works were completed, *a second time* the Lord appeared to him by night, as He had done at Gabaon, and told him that the solemn prayer which he had poured forth on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple had been accepted; for, said He, "I have sanctified this Temple which thou hast built to put My name there for ever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there always. And if thou

wilt walk before Me, as thy father walked, in simplicity of heart and in uprightness, and wilt do all that I have commanded thee, I will establish the throne of thy kingdom over Israel for ever; but if you and your children, revolting, shall turn away from following Me, and will not keep My commandments and My ceremonies, but will go and worship strange gods, and adore them, I will take away Israel from the face of the land which I have given them, and the Temple which I have sanctified to My name I will cast out of My sight, and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people."

olomon wards king iram.

To reward Hiram, king of Tyre, for the service he had rendered him by supplying wood from Libanus, and other materials, Solomon made over to him twenty cities in the land of Galilee; but when Hiram saw these cities he was not satisfied with the gift, and named the land in which they were situated *Chabul* (*displeasing*); yet he continued on friendly terms with Solomon, and, in return, sent him a gift of 120 talents of gold.

ther great idertakings of olomon.

Solomon now turned his attention to other great works. Besides completing the fortress of Mello, begun by David on Mount Sion, and strengthening the walls of Jerusalem, he rebuilt and fortified many important cities, to guard the approaches to his kingdom against the encroachments of surrounding nations. Where his kingdom touched the river Euphrates, to protect his eastern caravans he built the city of Tadmor, or Palmyra, the magnificent ruins of which are still to be seen, standing lonely, in the midst of a vast desert, a day's journey from the river. With the assistance of king Hiram, he was enabled to fit out vessels which sailed to most distant shores, and returned laden with the costly products of far-off lands. Those which left the Mediterranean coast visited the south of Spain, and brought back

silver from the mines of Tarshish or Tartessus. Others, again, sailing from Asiongaber and Ailath, at the head of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, made a voyage to Ophir, and after a lapse of three years, returned in safety, bringing with them to king Solomon 420 talents* of gold.

The Queen of Saba.

Of the many eminent visitors whom the fame of Solomon's greatness brought from all parts of the world to hear the words of wisdom that fell from his lips, the most distinguished was the Queen of Saba, a country lying on the south-eastern shore of the Red Sea. The accounts she had received of his surpassing wisdom seemed to her so incredible, that she determined to judge for herself; and with a large retinue set out for Jerusalem, to try Solomon, as the Scripture says, *with hard questions*. Entering the city with her vast train of attendants, and with camels bearing riches and precious spices, and an immense quantity of gold and precious stones, she came to the king, and spoke to him all that she had in her heart. Solomon's replies filled her with admiration; and when she saw his great wisdom, and the house which he had built, and the meat of his table, and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers, and their apparel, and the cup-bearers, and the holocausts which he offered in the House of the Lord, she was so overcome with astonishment that "there was no more spirit in her." Then addressing Solomon, she said: "The report which I heard in my own country concerning thy words and thy wisdom is true. But they exceed the fame which I heard, though at first I did not believe those who told me, till I came myself and saw with my own eyes; now I have proved that scarce one half of thy wisdom had been told me: thou hast exceeded the same with thy virtues. Happy are thy men, and happy are thy servants, who stand always before thee, and hear

* A gold talent = £6,000 (nearly).

thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, whom thou hast pleased, and who hath set thee upon the throne of Israel, because the Lord hath loved Israel for ever, and hath appointed thee king to do judgment and justice." She then presented Solomon with much gold, with spices in great abundance, and with most precious stones, after which she departed laden with gifts to her own country.

lomon's hes.

Solomon continued to increase in wealth and splendour; and we are told that in a single year his revenue amounted to 666 talents of gold, in addition to the vast amount of gold and silver brought to him by merchants, and the tribute he received from the kings of Arabia and the lords of the lands. In the House of the Forest of Libanus he hung 200 massive shields of the purest gold, and 300 targets of fine gold; and all the vessels in use at his table were also of gold. But the most magnificent work of art which he had made for his own use was his throne of ivory and gold. Leading up to it were six steps, and at each end of the steps was a lion, the symbol of the tribe of Juda. The back of the throne was rounded, and for the elbows to rest on were two arms or stays supported on lions; the foot-stool of the throne was also of pure gold.

n gnificence.

In riches and wisdom Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth; and every year saw in Jerusalem numerous kings and rulers, bringing with them their presents of gold, silver, rich garments, armour, costly spices, horses and mules, all anxious to pay honour to the great king, and to hear the words of wisdom which God had put in his heart. Whenever he moved through the city he was attended by gorgeous trains of chariots and horsemen; and we read that he made silver to be as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars to be as common as sycamores that grow in the plains.

CHAPTER LXXV

DOWNFALL AND LAST DAYS OF SOLOMON

SOLOMON had now attained the height of his glory; but, as St. Augustine remarks, prosperity, which is a severe trial for the wise, was more disadvantageous to him than wisdom herself had been profitable. His unbounded wealth and luxury were the immediate cause of his downfall. Nothing could be more beautiful than the commencement of his reign, nor more terrible than the latter part of it, ending as it did in excess and idolatry.

The causes of Solomon's downfall.

In addition to his Egyptian wife, he had taken wives from the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Sidonians, and the Hethites, from those heathen peoples with whom Almighty God had expressly forbidden the Hebrews either to marry or to give in marriage. He had in all 700 wives who ranked as queens, and 300 concubines or secondary wives. In his old age these women turned away his heart from following the Lord as David, his father, had done, and caused him to go after strange gods, and to offer sacrifice and incense to their abominable idols. He worshipped Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Moloch, the idol of the Ammonites. He, moreover, built a temple on the hill over against Jerusalem to Chamos, the idol of Moab, and another to Moloch, while each of the gods of his pagan wives was worshipped according to its own peculiar rites and ceremonies.

Already had God appeared to Solomon on two occasions and now, being angry with him, He spoke to him a *third time*, saying: "Because thou has done this, and hast not kept My covenant and My precepts, which I have commanded thee, I will divid

God speaks to Solomon a third time.

and rend Thy kingdom, and give it to thy servant. Nevertheless, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Neither will I take away the whole kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for the sake of David my servant, and Jerusalem which I have chosen."

lad the lomite.

The first adversary whom God raised up to disturb the peaceful reign of Solomon was Adad the Edomite. At the time when David had instructed Joab to massacre the Edomites, this man succeeded in making good his escape, and with a number of followers sought refuge in Egypt, where he was hospitably received by Pharao. Such great favour did he find with the king that he was given Pharao's own sister-in-law in marriage, and his son was brought up with the king's children. When Adad heard that both David and Joab were dead, he besought Pharao to allow him to depart to his own country, and having received permission, he began to draw off the Edomites from their allegiance to Solomon.

l zon.

A more formidable enemy soon appeared in the north in the person of Razon, the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Adarezer, king of Soba, when the latter was defeated by David. Putting himself at the head of a lawless band, he fixed his abode at Damascus, and from there made raids into the surrounding country, till he became so powerful that the people of Damascus made him their king. Here he succeeded in holding out against all the force that Solomon was able to send against him.

J boam, the s of Nabat.

But the crowning danger of all was to come from one of his own servants—the servant on whom God had said that He would bestow the greater part of Solomon's kingdom. This instrument of God's anger against the wickedness of the king

was Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, of the tribe of Ephraim. Employed by Solomon as overseer of the works when he was fortifying Mello and repairing the walls of Jerusalem, he made himself acquainted with the dispositions of the people, and heard their complaints regarding the heavy taxes which the king's lavish expenditure had brought upon them. Then taking advantage of their discontent, he sowed the seeds of rebellion in such a manner by his discourses that the imprudent answer of Roboam on a later occasion served but to bring them to maturity.

The prophecy of Ahias.

One day when Jeroboam had left the city alone, he was met by the prophet Ahias, clad in a new garment, who addressed him in words that filled him with surprise. Taking his new cloak from his shoulders, Ahias proceeded to tear it into twelve parts, ten of which he presented to Jeroboam, saying: "Take to thee ten pieces; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give thee ten tribes. But one tribe shall remain to him for the sake of My servant David, and Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. Yet I will make him prince all the days of his life, but I will take away the kingdom out of his son's hands. If, then, thou will hearken to all that I shall command thee, and do what is right before Me, I will be with thee, and will build thee up a faithful house, as I built a house for David.'" Word of what had taken place having come to the ears of Solomon, he sought the life of Jeroboam; but the latter fled to Egypt, and remained at the Court of Sesac till Solomon's death.

The history of Solomon terminates somewhat abruptly in these words: "And the rest of the words of Solomon and all that he did, and his wisdom, behold they are

all written in the *Book of the Words of the Days of Solomon.* And the days that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel, were 40 years. And he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David; and Roboam, his son, reigned in his stead." The Book named here is lost, with divers others mentioned in Holy Writ. As it has pleased God that these writings should not come down to us, we can only speak from conjecture of the repentance of Solomon. Some are of opinion that the *Book of Proverbs*, as well as that of *Ecclesiastes*, was composed by him after his repentance, and that in them he expresses his sentiments of affliction and self-condemnation, and his opinion of all earthly gratifications. "Whatever my eyes desired," he says in *Ecclesiastes*, "I refused them not; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared. And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun. . . . Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole [business and duty] of man; and all things that are done, God will bring unto judgment, whether it be good or evil." The dreadful uncertainty we have with regard to Solomon's repentance should serve to keep us in humble fear, and teach us to work out our salvation with trembling. He died at Jerusalem in the year B.C. 975, at the age of 58.

Death of Solomon.

In the opinion of Catholic authorities, Solomon may be said with certainty to have written the *Book of Proverbs* (at least, the greater part; for, like the Psalms, they have been added to) and the *Canticle of Canticles. Ecclesiastes* is put into the mouth of Solomon, and the contents are such that the

Works of Solomon.

Book could have been written by him, but the style and language point to a much later period. Finally, the *Book of Wisdom*, though written in the person of Solomon, on account of his being the wise man by excellence, was written in Greek when the Jews were under the dominion of Egypt, probably in Egypt itself during the so-called Alexandrine period.

PART VI

FROM THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM ON SOLOMON'S DEATH TO THE END OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

B.C. 975 TO B.C. 536

CHAPTER LXXVI

KINGDOMS OF JUDA AND ISRAEL—DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM UNDER ROBOAM, B.C. 975

HE only children of Solomon named in Scripture are his son Roboam, whose mother was Naama, an Ammonite princess, and two daughters, Tapheth and Basemath. On his father's death, oboam, now 41 years of age, proceeded to Sichem, here all Israel had come together to acknowledge him as eir king. To this assembly Jeroboam also had been mmoned from Egypt, and was present when the people, efore acknowledging the claims of Roboam to the crown, emanded an abatement of the taxes and impositions id upon them by Solomon for the amassing of those normous riches which they saw squandered in maintaining stly palaces for his many wives, and in erecting temples their false gods.

o am and r oam at ic m.

Filled with discontent by reason of their heavy burdens, they asked Roboam to lessen the grievous yoke to which they had been subjected, and undertook in return to serve him faithfully. e asked for three days' time during which to consider

to am con- ult the wise ou ellors.

their petition, promising that at the end of that tim he would make known to them his decision. He, accord ingly, called together the old and experienced counsello of the late king, and asked them to express their opinio They recommended leniency, saying: "If thou wilt yiel to this people to-day, and condescend to them, and gra their petition, and wilt speak gentle words to them, the will be thy servants always."

The advice of the young men.

Not satisfied with this advice, Roboam next consulte the younger men who had been brought u with him; but they, thinking to flatter hi and to gain favour with him, said: "Th shalt thou speak to them: 'My little finger is thick than the back of my father. Now, my father put a hea yoke upon you, but I will add to it; he beat you wi whips, but I will beat you with scorpions.'" The words pleased Roboam; and when on the third day were assembled to hear his decision, he answered as t young men had counselled him. Now, all had come the meeting filled with expectation of better things, a eager to hear what Roboam would do to ease their lo but when his cruel words fell upon their ears they we at first struck with dismay, a feeling which soon ga way to one of fiercest indignation. God thus permitte Roboam to act imprudently, and disposed things in su a manner that the prediction of Ahias might come pass.

Revolt of the ten tribes.

Seeing that the king would not hearken to their ju demands, the people cried out: "Wh portion have we in David? or what inher ance in the son of Isai? Go home to t dwellings, O Israel: now, David, look to thy own hous Ten tribes thereupon forsook Roboam, and refused h their allegiance.

Sensible at length of the rash step he had taken, t

king called to him Aduram, who was over the tribute, and bade him go quickly and do what he could to appease the tumult; but no sooner did he appear before the people than they attacked him with stones and killed him. The king himself only saved his life by leaping into his chariot and fleeing to Jerusalem. The ten tribes now chose Jeroboam to be their king, and these formed the new kingdom of Israel. To Roboam, as head of the tribe of Juda, there remained but his own tribe and the *one* tribe of Benjamin, as God had already foretold to Solomon, and according to the prophecy of Ahias. Of these two tribes was composed the kingdom of Juda, over which the descendants of Solomon continued to reign.

ıe two ıgdoms.

Immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, Roboam set to work to raise an army of 180,000 men, with which to compel the submission of the rebel tribes; but the word of the Lord came to the prophet Semeias, bidding him tell the king to desist from his undertaking, as the disaffection of the tribes was according to the purpose of God. Roboam obeyed without demur. He next proceeded to strengthen his reduced kingdom by fortifying many of the cities of Juda and Benjamin, setting over them military governors, furnishing them with every means of defence, and storing them with such provisions as would be necessary in case of a siege. His kingdom received further support by the priests and Levites flocking to him from all parts of Israel. Because Jeroboam had forbidden them to execute their priestly office to the Lord, they, rather than neglect the practice of religion, or conform to a false one, set a noble example by voluntarily enduring temporal loss in leaving their possessions, and passed over to Juda and Jerusalem. Moreover, additional strength was given to the cause of Roboam by many

ɔoam fortifies ıy cities.

coming out of all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice their victims before the Lord, the God of their fathers.

During the first three years of his reign Roboam prospered, because he walked in the ways of David. He had married numerous wives, and had a large family of sons and daughters; but his favourite wife was Maacha, the daughter of Absalom, and mother of Abia, whom he destined to be his successor.

Jeroboam makes Sichem his capital.

As his capital, Jeroboam rebuilt and strengthened Sichem, on Mount Ephraim, which had been laid in ruins by Abimelech and Gideon; he also fortified Phanuel, and thus, by means of these cities, secured both sides of the Jordan.

CHAPTER LXXVII

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—JEROBOAM I., B.C. 975-954

The golden calves of Jeroboam.

Fearing that, if his people went to Jerusalem to worship God and to celebrate the religious festivals, they might repent of what they had done and return to their lawful king, Jeroboam determined on the impious plan of strengthening the foundations of his government by establishing a peculiar religion for his own subjects. In imitation of the Egyptians among whom he had sojourned, he made two golden calves, and having built temples to them in Bethel and in Dan, he commanded his subjects, saying: "Go ye up no more to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." He also erected many other temples in the high places; and from the lowest of the people, who were not of the tribe of Levi,

he made priests to offer sacrifice to his idols. And as God had prescribed the fifteenth day of the seventh month on which to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, this wicked prince purposely made choice of the fifteenth day of the eighth month, that the observance of the days appointed might be obliterated.

The prophet at Bethel.

On the festival day, Jeroboam went up to Bethel, and while he was there offering incense in person, behold there came a man of God out of Juda, who, when he saw the king standing at the altar burning incense, cried out: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: 'Behold a child shall be born to the house of David, Josias by name, and he shall immolate upon thee the priests of the high places who now burn incense upon thee, and he shall burn men's bones upon thee.' Moreover, this shall be the sign that the Lord hath spoken: Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." On hearing these words, the king was filled with anger, and stretching forth his hand, ordered the prophet to be seized; but in a moment his hand became withered, so that he could not draw it back again. The altar, moreover, was rent, and ashes were poured out from it, according to the sign which the man of God had given. In alarm, Jeroboam besought the prophet that he would petition the Lord for him; and when the man of God had prayed for him, behold his hand was restored. Filled with gratitude for the favour wrought, the king requested the prophet to come and dine with him, that he might make him presents; but the latter answered: "I will not go with thee, nor eat bread, nor drink water in this place, for so it was enjoined me by the word of the Lord, who also commanded me not to return the same way by which I came here." The prophet then took his leave, and set out to return home.

The disobedient prophet.

Now there dwelt in Bethel a certain old prophet, who, hearing from his sons what had happened, and having discovered which way the man of God had taken, went in search of him, and found him resting under a turpentine-tree. He saluted him, and asked him to return, saying: "I, too, am a prophet like unto thee, and an angel spoke to me, bidding me bring thee back with me into my house, that thou mightest eat bread and drink water." Deceived by these words, the man of God returned, and as they sat together at table the word of the Lord came to the old prophet, and he prophesied, saying: "Thus saith the Lord: Because thou hast not been obedient to the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, and hast returned, and eaten and drunk in the place wherein He commanded thee not to do, thy dead body shall not be brought into the sepulchre of thy fathers."

Death of the disobedient prophet.

His punishment soon overtook him. Seated on his ass, he had not proceeded far on his journey when a lion sprang upon him and killed him, but injured not the ass on which he was riding. Soon afterwards, some men passing along that way discovered the body lying in the road, with the lion and the ass standing beside it, and coming into Bethel, they reported what they had seen. When the old prophet heard what had happened, he hastened to the spot, and taking up the body, had it conveyed back to the city where he reverently buried it in his own sepulchre. He mourned for the death of the man of God, and said to his sons: "When I am dead, bury me in the same sepulchre lay my bones beside his bones, for assuredly the word shall come to pass which he hath foretold against the altar that is in Bethel and against all the temples of the high places."

Prophecy of Ahias.

Despite the warnings of evil that were to befall him if he persisted in his sinful practices, Jeroboam nevertheless persevered in his idolatry, and of the meanest of his subjects who were able to present the oil and the necessary victims he made priests of the high places. God, however, was not to be mocked. The king's son, Abia, fell sick, and his father, alarmed for his safety, said to the boy's mother: "Arise, and change thy dress, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Silo, to Ahias, the prophet who told me that I should reign over this people: he will tell thee what will become of the child." Without delay she set out on her journey, taking with her honey and bread as a present for Ahias, whose eyes were now dim by reason of his advanced age. The prophet had been warned by God who it was that was coming to him, and of the nature of her errand, so that no sooner had she set foot on the threshold of his house than he called out to her, and said: "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam: why dost thou feign to be another? But I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." He then recounted to her all the evils that were to befall the family of Jeroboam: that for his sins his house should be cut off, that the child should die as she entered the city on her return, and that he alone of all Jeroboam's family should be laid in a sepulchre. With a heart full of grief she arose and departed for Thersa, to which place the king had removed his Court from Sichem. The child died as the prophet had foretold, and all Israel mourned for him.

Jeroboam defeated by Asa.

The remaining history of the reign of Jeroboam is intermingled with that of Juda, and is but a record of the constant strife that was carried on between the rival kingdoms. In the eighteenth year of his reign we find him at war with Abia, who had succeeded his father Roboam as king of Juda.

As the two armies stood in battle array, opposed to each other on Mount Semeron, the sacred trumpets of the priests were sounded, and all the men of Juda shouted. At the same time God struck fear into the heart of Jeroboam, so that he and all Israel suffered a terrible defeat, and fled before Juda. Abia pursued them with great slaughter, and captured several cities; indeed, so complete was the victory that Israel was unable to offer further resistance during the rest of the reign of Abia.

Death of Jeroboam.

After an inglorious reign of twenty-two years, God struck Jeroboam and he died, and was buried in the tomb of his fathers. His son Nadab succeeded him, B.C. 954.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—ROBOAM, ABIA, AND ASA, B.C. 975-914

Juda falls into idolatry.

ROBOAM, B.C. 975-958.—As we have already seen, during the first three years of his reign, Roboam walked in the footsteps of David, and from his capital, Jerusalem, ruled Juda and Benjamin wisely and well; and God prospered him. But soon there came a change. He and his people fell into the grossest idolatry, and abandoned themselves to the most abominable vices, so that they provoked the Lord even more than their fathers had done by the sins which they committed. They built altars to their idols, and set up statues and groves upon every high hill.

To punish their wickedness, God made use of Sesac, king of Egypt, who, in the fifth year of the reign of Roboam, came up against Juda, with an army of 60,000 horsemen, a countless number of foot-soldiers, and 1,200

chariots, and after capturing many strong cities, appeared before the walls of the capital. Influenced by fear, Roboam had recourse to the prophet Semeias, who rebuked him, saying: "Thus saith the Lord: 'You have left Me, and I have left you in the hand of Sesac.'" But when the king and the princes of Juda humbly acknowledged the justice of their punishment, the word of the Lord came to Semeias: "Because they are humbled, I will not destroy them, and I will give them a little help, and My wrath shall not fall upon Jerusalem by the hand of Sesac. But yet they shall serve him, that they may know the difference between My service and the service of a kingdom of the earth." Roboam was driven to conclude an ignominious peace by surrendering to Sesac the enormous treasures of the Temple amassed by Solomon, as well as the costly adornments of the royal palace, including the golden shields. To replace the last named, he caused shields of brass to be made, and these he delivered to the captains of the shield-bearers who guarded the entrance of the palace. An interesting fact connected with this invasion of the Egyptian king is mentioned by Dr. Smith: "The expedition of Shishak (*Sesac*) is one of the chief points of contact between sacred history and the records of Egyptian monuments. On the wall of the great temple of Karnak are the sculptured figures of captains with features clearly Jewish, and the appended inscription contains, among a long list of conquests, the name of 'Yuda Melchi' (*The kingdom of Juda*)."

Sesac, king of Egypt, carries away the treasures of the Temple.

No other important event is recorded in the reign of Roboam. Although the people on the whole seem to have profited by the lesson taught them, "for even in Juda there were found good works," yet the character of the king is summed up in these words: "He did evil, and did not prepare his

eath of oboam.

heart to seek the Lord." When he seemed to have repented, his sorrow was apparently actuated only by a servile fear, and we thus remain in doubt as to his final conversion. After a reign of seventeen years he died at the age of 58, and was succeeded by his son Abia, B.C. 958.

Abia's victory at Mount Semeron.

ABIA, B.C. 958-955.—It was in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam that Abia (or Abiam) became king of Juda. His reign was short, lasting but three years; and the only great event recorded of him is his victory over Jeroboam at Mount Semeron, related in the preceding chapter. We are told that he walked in all the sins of his father, and that his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God; but that for David's sake he was given a son to succeed him, and to establish Jerusalem. When he died, he was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Asa, his son, reigned in his stead.

Asa's reforms.

ASA, B.C. 955-914.—Asa, the third king of Juda, came to the throne in the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign, and for forty-one years ruled over Juda. His long reign was contemporary with that of the first seven kings of Israel. He was a pious king, and, like David, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He began by destroying the idolatrous altars which had been erected in the high places, broke the statues of the gods, and cut down their groves. At the same time he deposed Maacha, his grandmother, from her rank of Queen-Mother, on account of the abominable idol she had set up; the grove which she had consecrated to her god he cut down; and the unholy image itself he burnt to ashes, which he strewed in the torrent Cedron. Some of the high places he did not take away; but all such as had been dedicated to the worship of idols or strange gods he removed. Those which were allowed to

stand were altars of the true God, erected, it is true, contrary to the law, which allowed of no sacrifice but in the Temple. On Juda he enjoined the necessity of seeking the Lord, the God of their fathers, and of conforming to the law and the commandments. The treasures of the Temple, plundered by Sesac, he renewed, and all the things which his father had vowed he himself carried out, bringing to the House of the Lord rich vessels and presents of gold and silver.

Defeat of Zara the Ethiopian.

The first ten years of his reign were years of peace, secured by the victory of Abia over Jeroboam, and this time he wisely employed in building and fortifying cities and rendering his army as efficient as possible, so that when danger threatened it would not find him unprepared. The first to disturb the peace of his reign was Zara the Ethiopian, the successor, probably, of Sesac, king of Egypt, who, with a mighty host of 1,000,000 men, came out against him as far as Maresa, a city in the south-west of Juda. Near to Maresa, in the vale of Sephata, he was met by the army of Asa, who called upon the name of the Lord, saying: "O God, there is no difference with Thee, whether Thou help with few or with many: help us, O Lord, our God, for with confidence in Thee and in Thy name we are come out against this multitude." God heard his prayer, and gave him an easy victory; the Egyptians fled, pursued by Asa as far as Gerara, and vast numbers of them were slain. After plundering many cities in the neighbourhood of Gerara, Asa with his army, laden with much spoil, returned to Jerusalem.

he prophet zarias.

On their return, they were met by the prophet Azarias, the son of Obed, who thus addressed them: "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Juda and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, because you have been with Him. If you seek Him, you shall find Him;

but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. And many days shall pass in Israel without the true God, and without a priest a teacher, and without the law. And when in their distress they shall return to the Lord, the God of Israel, and shall seek Him, they shall find Him. Do you, therefore, take courage, and let not your hands be weakened, for there shall be a reward for your work."

Asa's covenant with God.

With renewed courage, Asa sought out and destroyed every idol that still remained in his kingdom, and in the cities which he had taken. In the third month of the fifteenth year of his reign he assembled all Juda and Benjamin, and the strangers with them, besides many from the other tribes. Solemn sacrifices were offered in Jerusalem, and the covenant was confirmed that they should seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul. Then, with a loud voice, with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpets and of cornets, all solemnly swore to observe the promise they had thus renewed.

Asa seeks help from the Syrians.

After a long unbroken peace, Baasa, king of Israel, led his forces against Juda. To prevent his subjects from deserting to Asa, he fortified the frontier town of Rama, for he knew that many had already passed over to Juda for the sake of the true religion. The step that Asa now took to free himself from his troublesome foe displeased God, and brought down upon him the just rebuke of the prophet Hanani. Bringing the treasures of gold and silver out of the House of God, he sent them to Benadad, the heathen king of Damascus, and with these bought him off from his alliance with Baasa. Benadad then led an army into Israel, thus compelling Baasa to abandon Rama, so that he might protect his northern provinces. Asa at once took possession of Rama, and from its spoils fortified the two frontier towns of Gabaa and Maspha.

Asa reproved by the prophet Hanani.

Sent by God, Hanani came to Asa, and upbraided him for placing confidence in the king of Syria, and not in the Lord God; he, moreover, told him that he had acted foolishly, and that from that time wars should rise against him. Filled with indignation because of the prophet's boldness, Asa caused him to be cast into prison, and put to death many of his subjects, probably because they had sided with the prophet.

Death of Asa.

In his old age Asa fell a prey to a severe disease, which finally caused his death. Attacked by gout, he trusted too much to the skill of his physicians, and thought too little of seeking help from God. Becoming quickly worse, he died in the forty-first year of his reign, and in the fourth year of the reign of Achab, king of Israel. His body was laid on a bed covered with spices and precious ointments, and his people buried him in his own sepulchre, which he had made for himself in the city of David.

Although towards the end of his reign we find Asa acting imprudently, and guilty of many faults, yet for these he did penance, and deservedly merits to rank among the few just kings of Juda. He never forsook the worship of the Lord, as we gather from the words of the Sacred Text: "Asa did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as did David, his father."

Josaphat, his son, succeeded him, but before recounting the history of this prince, we turn again to the kings of Israel.

CHAPTER LXXIX

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—NADAB, BAASA, ELA, ZAMBRI, AND AMRI, B.C. 954-918

NADAB, B.C. 954-953.—Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, came to the throne of Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Juda, and died in the third year of the reign of that king. His reign was as inglorious as it was short: "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father, and in his sins, wherewith he made Israel to sin." He met with a violent death, being slain by his own general, Baasa, who had conspired against him, and found an opportunity for carrying out his wicked purpose when Israel was besieging Gebbethon, a city of the Philistines. Baasa was the son of Ahias, of the house of Issachar; and the crown of Israel, which he usurped on the death of Nadab, thus passed away from the tribe of Ephraim, and from the family of Jeroboam, after the short period of two generations. Baasa put to death the rest of Nadab's family, thus fulfilling to the very letter the prophecy of Ahias.

Nadab slain by Baasa.

BAASA, B.C. 953-930.—In the third year of Asa, king of Juda, Baasa became king over all Israel. Untaught by the severe judgments which had befallen Jeroboam and Nadab for their sins, he so continued to walk in their wicked footsteps that God sent the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, to warn him of the evils that were to come upon him and his house, because by his sins he had provoked the anger of the Lord.

The prophet Jehu.

The chief events in the reign of Baasa were concerned with his struggles against the rival kingdom of Juda. His attempts to fortify the frontier town of Rama, to

prevent his own people from going over to Asa, and how his attention was diverted by the sudden invasion of the north of Israel by Benadad of Damascus, who was in the pay of Asa, have already been related under the reign of king Asa in the preceding chapter.

War with Judah and Syria.

Baasa died in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, and was buried in Thersa, which was at this time the royal city of Israel. His son Ela now came to the throne.

ELA, B.C. 930-929.—Ela's reign lasted scarcely two years. While overcome with drink in the house of Arsa, the governor of Thersa, he was slain by Zambri, the captain of half the cavalry, who had conspired to take his life, and who was now proclaimed king in his stead. Thus, too, the dynasty of Baasa was brought to a close in the second generation.

Ela slain by Zambri.

ZAMBRI, B.C. 929.—This king began his short reign of seven days by seeking out and putting to death the friends and kinsfolk of Ela, and in so doing verified the words of the prophet Jehu. At this time the soldiers of Israel were besieging Gebbethon, and when it became known that Ela had been slain they resolved to elect a king for themselves. Their choice fell on Amri, their general; and no sooner had they proclaimed him king than he at once drew off his men from Gebbethon, and marched back to Thersa for the purpose of deposing his rival. Finding himself almost abandoned, and knowing his cause to be hopeless, Zambri withdrew to the royal palace, and having caused it to be set on fire, he perished in the flames.

Zambri puts an end to his own life.

AMRI, B.C. 929-918.—The death of Zambri did not leave Amri without a competitor; for, although the army had chosen him, yet was there a division of the people in favour of *Thebni*, the son of Gineth, who, till B.C. 925, was the acknowledged ruler of

Amri's competitor Thebni.

half of Israel. The civil war which raged between the rival factions was brought to a close by the death of Thebni, who was killed in battle, in the thirty-first year of the reign of Asa. Thus Amri became sole king of Israel.

Samaria the new capital of Israel.

Thersa had been so much ruined during the civil wars that Amri determined to choose a new seat of government. He accordingly purchased from Somer, to whom it belonged, a hill a few miles to the north-west of Sichem, on which he built Samaria. This city, which was greatly adorned by succeeding kings, stood in a delightful and commanding situation, and gave its name to the adjacent territory. It remained the capital till the end of the kingdom of Israel.

Amri's son Achab marries Jezabel.

Amri appears to have formed an alliance with Benadad, the Syrian king of Damascus. He also married his son and successor to Jezabel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon. He reigned over Israel twelve years, six at Thersa, and six at Samaria, where he died and was buried. His dynasty supplied four kings to Israel. Of Amri it is said: "He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam, and did evil above all that were before him." He was succeeded by his son Achab, B.C. 918, in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Juda.

CHAPTER LXXX

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—ACHAB, B.C. 918-897 —THE PROPHETS ELIAS AND ELISEUS

Achab and Jezabel.

The name of Achab and that of his consort Jezabel, daughter of king Ethbaal, have become proverbial to denote a man or woman absolutely given up to the grossest idolatry and wickedness. The first four years of Achab's reign were contem-

porary with the last four years of Asa, and in all he reigned twenty-two years at Samaria.

Achab builds a temple to Baal.

Jezabel was the chief instigator of all the evils of Achab's reign. To please her, he even introduced her country's idols, himself adored and served them, built an altar and a temple to Baal in Samaria, planted a grove to Astarte, and so abandoned himself to his abominable idolatry that it is said of him: "He did more to provoke the Lord than even his wicked father Amri had done." In his days, too, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho, in spite of the warning words written by Josue; but God punished his audacity by causing the death of his sons while the city was rebuilding.

Elias is fed by ravens.

To maintain the cause of the true God, there was sent to the house of Israel a holy prophet, Elias the Thesbite, a man full of active and generous zeal. Undismayed by any fear of what the king might do, he boldly presented himself before Achab, and thus addressed him: "As the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, in whose sight I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to the words of my mouth." He was allowed to depart unmolested. Directed by God, he took up his abode by the torrent Carith, between Samaria and the Jordan, and every night and morning he was fed by ravens, which brought him bread and flesh to eat, but his thirst he quenched from the waters of the torrent.

Elias at Sarepta.

After some time the torrent dried up, and then God commanded him to go to Sarepta, a town of the Sidonians, where a widow would supply his wants. He arose at once, and departed on his journey. As he drew near to the town, he saw a woman gathering sticks, and calling to her, asked for a little water to drink. She turned to fetch it, when he called after her a

second time: "Bring me also, I beseech thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand." She answered: "As the Lord liveth, I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a pot, and a little oil in a cruise: behold I am gathering sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Elias bade her fear not, but first make a cake for him, and afterwards one for herself and her son. At the same time he promised her, in the name of the God of Israel, that her pot of meal should not waste, nor the cruise of oil be diminished, until the day wherein the Lord would give rain upon the earth. She believed his words, and acted according as he told her; and for her faith God rewarded her by keeping her pot of meal and her cruise of oil replenished as long as the holy prophet remained with her.

Elias raises the widow's son to life.

Shortly after this her son fell sick and died. The broken-hearted mother poured out her grief before Elias, who was so touched with sorrow for her distress that he gently took the body of the dead child in his arms, and carrying it into the upper chamber where he abode, laid it upon his own bed. Then, having stretched himself three times over the corpse, he thus besought the Lord: "O Lord, my God, let the soul of this child, I beseech Thee, return into his body." Scarcely had he uttered his prayer when the child revived, and Elias returned him to his mother with the words: "Behold thy son liveth." Struck with astonishment and filled with joy, the widow exclaimed: "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true."

Elias again before Achab.

In the third year of the famine the word of the Lord again came to Elias, this time bidding him return to Achab, for rain was soon to fall upon the parched earth. Previous to this, Jezabel had put to death, as she supposed, all the

prophets of the true God that were to be found in Israel; but in spite of all her precautions, 100 of these holy men had been secretly warned by a God-fearing man named Abdias, the governor of Achab's house, and by him had been concealed in caves, where, unknown to the king's officers, he had them daily supplied with food. One day Achab called Abdias to him and said: "Go into the land unto all fountains of water, and into all valleys, to seek for grass, and save the horses and mules, that the beasts may not utterly perish." Now it so chanced that when Abdias was away executing the king's commands he was met by Elias, who was already on his journey to the Court of Achab as the bearer of God's message to the king. Abdias recognised the prophet at once, and reverently saluting him, told him what had befallen the other prophets, and how, to get him also into his power, the king had made most diligent search throughout all the land. Elias answered: "Go, and tell thy master that Elias is here." In obedience to the prophet's command, but fearful of the consequences, Abdias carried the message to Achab, who immediately set out in person to meet Elias, and, coming up to him, sternly rebuked him, and asked: "Art thou he that troublest Israel?" Nothing daunted, Elias firmly, but respectfully, answered: "I have not troubled Israel; it is thou and thy father's house, who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baal." And that the king might know the truth of his words, he requested him to call together the people of Israel, and all the prophets of Baal and Astarte, and to let them meet him on Mount Carmel.

as and the phets of el.

Achab acceded to his proposal, and at the appointed time, all were assembled on Carmel to see what Elias would do. Standing before the multitude, he spoke thus: "I, a prophet of the Lord, stand alone, but the prophets of Baal are four

hundred and fifty men. Let two bullocks be given us; let them choose one for themselves, and, having cut it in pieces, let them lay it upon wood, but put no fire under; and I will do the same with the other bullock. Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord: and the God that shall answer by fire, let him be God." All the people assented to a trial so fair and excellent.

The false prophets call to Baal in vain.

The prophets of Baal first took their bullock, and having arranged everything according as Elias had directed, from morning till noon they cried aloud: "O Baal, hear us!" but their god answered them not. When it was now mid-day, Elias, going up to them, said: "Cry with a louder voice; for he is god, and perhaps he is talking, or is in an inn, or on a journey; or perhaps he is asleep, and must be awaked." Stimulated by the jeers of Elias, the priests of Baal leaped over the altar in frenzy, cut their bodies, and cried louder and louder: still Baal vouchsafed no reply.

Elias's sacrifice.

Elias had assigned to Baal's prophets the morning during which to offer their sacrifice; but when the time of the evening sacrifice drew near, and their prayers still remained unanswered, he built an altar with twelve stones, by which he signified that all Israel should return with one heart to the service of God. He also drew a trench round the altar; and when he had killed the bullock, he cut it in pieces, and laid them on the wood of the altar. Three times in obedience to his orders were the victim and the altar drenched with water, and the trenches filled therewith, so as to convince the people that there was no deceit, and to show, in a more striking light, the miracle that God would work. When all was ready, Elias drew near and prayed thus: "O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, show this day that Thou art the God of Israel, and that I am

Thy servant, and that according to Thy commandment I have done all these things. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may learn that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart again." No sooner was his prayer ended than fire came down from heaven, which consumed not only the holocaust and the wood, but the very stones of the altar, and dried up the water in the trenches. On seeing the wonderful miracle, the people fell on their faces, exclaiming: "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God." Then, by the direction of Elias, the prophets of Baal were immediately seized and led away to the torrent Cison, where they were slain.

Rain granted at the prayer of Elias.

Leaving the king, Elias withdrew for a short while to the summit of Carmel, where he remained wrapped in prayer with his head bowed down between his knees, after he had sent his servant to look towards the sea for the first sign of the coming rain. Six times did the servant return to say that he could see nothing; but being sent a seventh time, he came back saying that he had seen a little cloud, no larger than a man's foot, rising out of the sea. At once Elias sent word to Achab to prepare his chariot with all speed and to hasten down the mountain, lest the rain should prevent him. Soon the clouds began to gather overhead, and the rain to descend in torrents, whereupon Achab hastened to Jezrahel, preceded by Elias, who, girding up his loins, ran before him.

Elias flees from Jezabel.

When Jezabel received word of all that had happened, and how the prophets of Baal had been slain, she was filled with anger, and despatched a messenger to Elias to tell him that before that same hour on the morrow he should be as one of them. Elias, who had so boldly braved the anger of the king, was filled with alarm by her threat, and with a single attendant fled to Bersabee of Juda. There he left his

servant, and having advanced a day's journey into the desert, he sat down to rest under a juniper-tree, and prayed to God to take him out of life; then casting himself upon the ground, he fell asleep. Presently he was awakened by an angel, who bade him rise and eat. Looking round, Elias beheld a cake and a pitcher of water, and when he had eaten and quenched his thirst, he fell asleep again. A second time the angel awoke him, and again bade him refresh himself, for he had yet a long journey before him. The prophet obeyed, and in the strength of that food, walked forty days and forty nights, until he came to Horeb, the Mount of God, where he abode in a cave.

Elias's vision on Horeb.

While in this retreat, God granted the like favour to him that He had formerly bestowed upon Moses in the same place, for here the word of the Lord came to him, saying: "What dost thou here, Elias?" He answered that he had been zealous for the Lord of Hosts, but that the children of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, had thrown down His altars, and slain the prophets, and that his own life was now being sought. Upon this, he was commanded to stand forth, and behold the manifestation of God. First there came a mighty wind which shattered the rocks of Horeb in pieces; but the Lord was not in the wind. Next an earthquake caused the rocks to tremble; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then a fire burst out of the rocks; but the Lord was not in the fire. Lastly there was a whistling of gentle air, on hearing which Elias covered his face with his mantle, while at the same time the voice of the Lord was heard bidding him go and return through the desert to Damascus. "When thou art come thither," God said to him, "thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu, the son of Namsi, to be king over Israel, and Eliseus, the son of Saphat, thou

shalt anoint to be prophet in thy room ; and I will leave seven thousand men in Israel whose knees have not bowed before Baal."

Having left Horeb to carry out the Divine commission, Elias came to Abelmeula, in the upper part of the valley of the Jordan, and there found Eliseus in a field ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen. Going up to him, he threw his mantle over him, whereupon Eliseus left his oxen and ran after the prophet, saying: "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." The prophet consented ; and after Eliseus had given a parting feast to his friends, and taken leave of his parents, he followed Elias and ministered to him.

Elias throws his mantle over Eliseus.

CHAPTER LXXXI

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—REIGN OF ACHAB (*continued*)—NABOTH'S VINEYARD—DEATH OF ACHAB, B.C. 897

In the year 901 B.C. Samaria was besieged by Benadad II., king of Syria. The occasion of this war is not known with certainty, but some suppose that Achab had refused to pay tribute, and that it was to enforce compliance with his demands that Benadad came with thirty-two vassal kings and a mighty host, and laid siege to Achab's capital. The Syrian king first sent messengers to Achab to demand the instant surrender of his wives and children, and all the gold and silver of his palace, and to threaten direful vengeance should he refuse to accede to his demands. By the advice of the ancients and the people, Achab scorned the disgraceful proposal, and bade the messengers say to their master: "Let not the girded boast himself as the

Samaria besieged by the Syrians.

ungirded"—words that have since become proverbial, cautioning a man, however well armed he may be for the strife, never to boast before the victory.

Defeat of the Syrians.

At this juncture the courage of Achab received a fresh incentive by the appearance of a prophet who came to him, bidding him begin the attack, and God would grant him victory. Achab followed the advice, and sending out 232 princes of the tribes, he held his little army of 7,000 men in readiness to rush to the attack on a given signal. While Benadad was drinking in his pavilion in company with the two-and-thirty kings, a messenger was announced, who informed him that a body of young men had been seen to leave the city. Benadad contemptuously gave orders for the young men to be taken alive, whether they had come out to fight or to surrender. But the young princes slew the Syrian soldiers who came forward to seize them, while the rest of Achab's army, seeing what was done, raised a loud shout, and rushing upon the bewildered enemy, produced such a panic that they fled terror-stricken before them. The Israelites pursued them with great slaughter, and Benadad himself escaped with difficulty on horseback.

The Syrians at Aphec.

The prophet once more appeared before Achab, warning him not to be off his guard, for the Syrian king would come against him again in the following year. And so it happened; for the courtiers of Benadad flattered their king by telling him that the gods of the Israelites were gods of the hills, and that his defeat was owing to his having fought in a hilly country, but if he would attack in the plain he would be victorious. Benadad thought their counsel good, and resolved that next year he would carry it into effect. When the time was come he marched as far as Aphec, a walled city a little to the east of the Sea of Galilee, and there he

was met by the forces of Israel, which had been drawn up in two divisions, and appeared like two little flocks of goats when compared to the countless multitude commanded by Benadad. But a man of God, coming to Achab, addressed him in these words: "Thus saith the Lord: Because the Syrians have said the Lord is God of the hills, but is not God of the valleys, I will deliver all this great multitude into thy hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

Great slaughter of the Syrians.

The two armies joined battle; the Syrians were defeated with immense slaughter; and even of those who fled for refuge into Aphec, 27,000 were killed by the walls suddenly falling upon them. For a time Benadad lay concealed in the city, but was at length persuaded by his attendants to cast himself on the mercy of his conquerors. Achab spared his life and made an alliance with him, Benadad agreeing to restore the towns taken from Israel by his father. God was displeased with Achab for thus allowing a man worthy of death to escape, and by His prophet threatened the same judgment against him and his people that he ought to have inflicted on Benadad. Displeased and irritated by the prophet's threat, the king returned to Samaria.

Naboth's vineyard.

Soon after this, Achab's wickedness was brought to a climax by his treatment of Naboth, whose only crime was his unwillingness to part with the inheritance which he had received from his fathers. At Jezrahel the king had built a palace, near which was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. Desirous of having this for the purpose of converting it into a garden, Achab offered either to buy it or to give him a better vineyard in exchange. But as Naboth deemed it to be a mark of disrespect to part with his patrimony, unless he were in absolute want, he declined to entertain the king's proposal. His refusal so disturbed the

king that, in a fit of vexation, he cast himself upon his bed and would not eat. When Jezabel saw the king thus pining and fretful, she made diligent inquiries; and having learnt the cause, bade her husband be of good cheer and rise and eat, promising that she would obtain the vineyard for him.

Naboth is stoned to death.

Leaving Achab, she wrote letters in his name, sealed them with his ring, and sent them to the ancients and to the chief men that were in the city. In the king's name they were commanded to proclaim a fast, to call an assembly before which they were to summon Naboth, to procure two false witnesses to swear that they had heard him blaspheme God and the king, and then to lead him out and stone him to death. These cruel and impious directions were carried out to the letter; but Naboth's blood cried to heaven for vengeance. When Jezabel heard that Naboth was dead, full of joy she went to acquaint her husband, and bade him take possession of the vineyard.

God's judgments pronounced.

But what had been so wickedly acquired was not to be peacefully enjoyed; for soon the word of God came to Elias, commanding him go to Achab as the bearer of an awful message: "Thus saith the Lord: Thou hast slain; thou hast, moreover, taken possession. In this place, wherein the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick thy blood also. I will bring evil upon thee; I will cut down thy posterity; and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nabat. As to Jezabel, the dogs shall devour her in the field of Jezrahel."

Achab humbles himself.

Terrified by such awful threats, Achab rent his garments, and put on hair-cloth; he moreover fasted, slept on sackcloth, and walked with his head bowed down in sorrow. God was moved by the king's repentance, and said to Elias: "Because he

hath humbled himself for My sake, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

Achab's friendship with Josaphat.

For three years peace reigned between Israel and Syria, and the rival kingdoms of Juda and Israel had so far laid aside their animosities as to be now on terms of peace and friendship. At this time Josaphat, Asa's successor, was king of Juda; and so close were the relations between Juda and Israel that Josaphat had married his son Joram to Athalia, the daughter of Achab and Jezabel.

The prophet Micheas.

In the third year of the peace with Syria, Josaphat paid a visit to the Court of Achab, and was received most hospitably, and with every mark of honour. Achab seized the present favourable opportunity to enlist Josaphat's help in his attempt to recover from the Syrians the town of Ramoth-Galaad, which Benadad, according to the treaty, ought to have restored, and which had not yet been given up. Josaphat expressed his willingness to join in the expedition, but before embarking on the undertaking, was desirous of consulting the Divine will. Achab accordingly assembled 400 prophets, and without exception all assured him of success. Still Josaphat was not satisfied, and asked if no prophet of the Lord was to be found, of whom they might inquire. Achab answered: "There is one man left, Micheas, the son of Jemla; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good to me, but evil." Nevertheless, as Josaphat expressed a wish to see the prophet, Micheas was summoned. Now, as they went along, the messenger said to Micheas: "Behold the words of the prophets with one mouth declare good things to the king; let thy word, therefore, be like theirs, and speak that which is good." Micheas answered him: "As the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord shall say to me, that will I speak." When he was brought into

Achab's palace, he found the two kings clothed in their royal robes, and seated upon their thrones with the 400 prophets standing before them. On being adjured by Achab to tell nothing but what was true, he replied: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said: 'These have no master: let every one of them return to his house in peace.' Now, therefore, behold the Lord hath given a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets that are here, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee." Achab was angry, and commanded Micheas to be put in prison till he himself should return victorious.

Expedition of Achab and Josaphat.

Relying on the promises of his own prophets, Achab was still bent on undertaking the war, and with Josaphat marched out to attack Ramoth-Galaad. But the words of Micheas still rang in his ears, and to insure greater safety for himself, he divested himself of his royal robes, and went into the battle disguised, knowing that his life would be especially aimed at. Nor was he mistaken; for Benadad had instructed his captains to direct their every energy against Achab, whom they were either to kill or take prisoner. In the press of the fight Josaphat, who was present in his royal robes, was in danger of being killed, having been mistaken for Achab; and it was only by his crying out that he was not Achab that the tide of battle was rolled in another direction.

Death of Achab.

But Achab's time had come; for an archer fired at random a shaft which struck the king, penetrating his lungs. Achab knew his hurt to be mortal, and said to his charioteer: "Turn, and carry me out of the army, for I am grievously wounded." His death that same evening put an end to the fight; for as soon as it became known that Achab was slain the cry went through all the army: "Let every man return to his

own city, and to his own country." The king's body was conveyed to Samaria, where it was buried; and as the chariot in which he had received his death-wound was being washed in the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked up the blood. His son Ochozias was his successor; but, before recounting the history of his reign, as Josaphat, king of Juda, was contemporary with Achab and his two sons, we return to the kingdom of Juda.

CHAPTER LXXXII

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—JOSAPHAT, JORAM, AND OCHOZIAS, B.C. 914-884

JOSAPHAT, B.C. 914-889.—At the age of 35, and in the fourth year of Achab, king of Israel, Josaphat succeeded Asa to the crown of Juda. During his long reign of twenty-five years, "he walked in the way of Asa, his father, and he declined not from it; and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Though he tolerated the high places that had been consecrated to God, yet he set himself to the task of destroying such high places and groves as were still to be found devoted to superstitious worship, and banished all abuses out of his dominions. In the third year of his reign he sent princes, priests, and Levites through the various cities of Juda, to explain the law of the Lord to the people, and to teach them the proper observance of it; and the fear of the Lord came upon the kingdoms round about Juda, so that they durst not make war against him. Of all the kings of Juda, none so much resembled David as Josaphat.

osaphat's iety.

He took advantage of the peace to fortify the cities of Juda and Benjamin, and put strong garrisons not only in them, but likewise in those cities of Ephraim taken by his

father Asa. The Philistines brought presents to him, and paid him their yearly tribute of silver, and the Arabians brought him immense flocks and herds. God so blessed him that he grew to be great and glorious.

His prosperity.

The alliance between Josaphat and Achab has already been mentioned in the preceding chapter, as well as the battle of Ramoth-Galaad, in which Achab was killed, and which so nearly proved fatal to Josaphat. On his return to Jerusalem after the battle, Josaphat was met by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, who rebuked him, saying: "Thou helpest the ungodly, and thou art joined in friendship with them that hate the Lord, and therefore thou didst deserve indeed the wrath of the Lord; but good works are found in thee, because thou hast taken away the groves out of the land of Juda, and hast prepared thy heart to seek the Lord, the God of thy fathers."

His alliance with Achab.

Being thus allowed by God to return in peace to his capital, he next entered with zeal into the work of improving and reforming the government of his subjects, and in person went through his kingdom, appointing judges in all the fortified cities. In Jerusalem he established a court of priests and Levites, and heads of families, presided over by the High Priest, to decide in cases relating to religion, as well as to inheritances and matrimonial cases. The distinction between the spiritual and temporal authority, instituted by God, is here clearly defined. In giving his instructions to the temporal judges, Josaphat said: "Take heed what you do, for you exercise not the judgment of man, but of the Lord. Let the fear of the Lord be with you, and do all things with diligence, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor desire of gifts." To the judges spiritual his charge was: "Take courage

Josaphat constitutes judges.

and do diligently, and the Lord will be with you in good things."

Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites combine against him.

The peace which had marked so many years of Josaphat's reign was disturbed at last by a combined invasion of Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, encouraged, no doubt, by the disaster that had overtaken the armies of Juda and Israel at Ramoth-Galaad. The first intimation received by the king of this hostile movement was brought by some messengers, who announced that a great army was already encamped at Engaddi, on the west of the Dead Sea. A solemn fast was proclaimed throughout the land; and in the midst of those that were assembled before the new court of the Temple, Josaphat stood and prayed for help to the God of their fathers, the God who was ruler over all kingdoms and nations, in whose hand was strength and power, and whom no one could resist. The answer to his prayer was soon forthcoming; for the Spirit of the Lord descending upon Jahaziel, a Levite, he cried out to the king, that on the morrow they would gain a victory without having to do battle, and that, if they only stood with confidence, they should see the wonderful help of the Lord. All bowed down their heads in thanksgiving; and then arose the voices of the Levites, singing aloud the praises of the Lord their God.

Victory of Berachah.

Early next morning the march was begun towards the desert of Thecua, the Levites leading the way, and singing: "Give glory to the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever." But now confusion reigned supreme amid the forces of the enemy, and already a scene of terrible slaughter had commenced among them. The different nations, becoming confused among the ambushes which they had set for Josaphat's army, began to fall upon one another, thinking it was the enemy they

were attacking. Now it was the Ammonites and the Moabites who were slaughtering the inhabitants of Mount Seir; now, again, it was the Ammonites and the Moabites who were destroying each other. When the men of Juda came up they were astonished to find the ground covered with the multitude of dead, and no enemy to oppose them. Three days were spent in collecting the spoils, which consisted principally of garments and precious vessels in such quantities that they were unable to carry all of them away. On the fourth day they assembled to praise God in the Valley of Blessing (*Berachah*), so called from their blessing and thanking the Lord in that spot for the wonderful victory He had granted them. Elated with joy, they returned to Jerusalem, singing their songs of praise, nor did they disperse till they had poured out their gratitude in the House of the Lord to their all-powerful Deliverer. When it became noised among the neighbouring nations how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Juda, none were bold enough to attack them, and thus the rest of Josaphat's reign was spent in peace.

Destruction of Josaphat's fleet.

His next work was to construct a fleet, and in this he was joined by Ochozias, king of Israel. At Asiongaber, on the Red Sea, his ships were shattered or wrecked, even before they could set sail, a disaster brought upon him on account of his alliance with the wicked Ochozias, as he learnt from the words of the prophet Eliezer.

Death of Josaphat.

In B.C. 889, the good and pious Josaphat passed away, and was buried in the city of David, leaving the crown to his unworthy son Joram, who during the latter years of his father's life had shared the royal dignity with him.

JORAM, B.C. 889-885.—Joram, now sole king of Juda, began his reign by cruelly putting to death his six

brothers, besides many of the princes of the land. In all, he ruled at Jerusalem nearly eight years, the first three in conjunction with Josaphat, having been associated with his father in the kingdom in the fifth year of Joram, the son of Achab, king of Israel.

ram, married Athalia, ughter of chab, intro- ces idolatry.

Unlike the pious Josaphat, his father, Joram, who had married Athalia, the daughter of Achab and Jezabel, imitated in all their wickedness the kings of Israel. To the ruin of his kingdom, he used every art, and even had recourse to violence to introduce idolatry, and set up the worship of Baal in the high places. Elias, who had foreseen the impiety of Joram, wrote a letter of warning, which was now delivered to the king, foretelling the destruction of his house, and his death by a most loathsome disease. The prophet's threats, however, were without effect.

ilistines and abians nder the al palace.

The first misfortune to befall Juda was the revolt of the Edomites, and the establishment by them of an independent kingdom. Joram marched against them, and, although he secured the victory, yet was he unable to reduce them to obedience. Next came the revolt of Lobna, a strongly fortified city of Juda bordering on Idumæa. Following close upon these revolts was a great invasion of Philistines and Arabians, who laid waste the land of Juda, and, closing in upon Jerusalem, plundered the king's palace, carried off all his substance, and either killed or led away all his wives and sons, except his youngest son, Ochozias.

J am dies of a l thsome d ease.

Last of all came the loathsome malady predicted by Elias. For two years the unhappy king was racked by a disease of the bowels, which left him without comfort night or day, till at length, worn out with suffering, he died. When he was dead, the people did not perform for him the usual

ceremonies as in the case of his predecessors : they buried him, indeed, in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

Ochozias, B.C. 885-884.—Joram, king of Israel, had been on the throne twelve years when Ochozias, his nephew, the son of Joram, king of Juda, succeeded his father on the throne. Ochozias was 22 years of age at the time of his accession, and reigned only one year ; but during that short interval, instigated by his mother, Athalia, he did much that was evil in the sight of the Lord, as the house of Achab had done, in Israel.

This king joined Joram, his uncle, in his attempt to recover Ramoth-Galaad from the Syrians, and was afterwards slain by Jehu, whom the Lord had anointed to destroy the house of Achab.

Death of Ochozias.

On the death of Ochozias, the crown of Juda was usurped by his mother Athalia, who put to death her grandsons. Only one escaped the clutches of the cruel murderess, namely, Joas, the youngest, whom Josabeth, the sister of Ochozias, and wife of the High Priest Joiada, succeeded in carrying away secretly, and concealing in the House of God, during the six years that Athalia reigned over Juda.

The crown of Juda usurped by Athalia.

THE FOURTH BOOK OF KINGS

This Book gives us the history of the kingdom of Israel to its close, and that of Juda to the Babylonian captivity. In it we behold some virtuous princes reigning over the two tribes, while we see that the ten tribes were uniformly governed by men of perverse morals. David and his descendants occupied the throne of Juda for nearly 480 years, and after the captivity continued in some degree of honour till the coming of Christ; but various families ruled over Israel. This Book contains the transactions of 308 years.

THE TWO BOOKS OF PARALIPOMENON, OR CHRONICLES

These Books are called Paralipomenon (Παραλειπόμενων), i.e., *of things left out*, because they are a kind of supplement to the Books of Kings, and contain such events as were passed over in those Books. They are also called *The Chronicles*, and are probably an abridgment, by Esdras, of the books so often quoted in *the Kings*, under the title of *The Words of the Days of the Kings of Israel*, and *of the Kings of Juda*.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—OCHOZIAS, B.C. 897-896

Elias taken up into Heaven

Moabites refuse pay tribute.

Ochozias, the son of Achab and Jezabel, began to reign over Israel, in Samaria, in the seventeenth year of Josaphat, king of Juda, and occupied the throne two years. His character is thus described in the words of the Sacred Text: "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and mother, and in the way of Jeroboam." No sooner had he come to the throne than the Moabites, encouraged by the disaster of Achab at Ramoth-Galaad, began to throw off his yoke, and refused to pay tribute.

Having one day fallen through a lattice from the flat

roof of his palace down into the room below, he received such injuries that his life was in danger; and being anxious to learn whether he would recover or not, he sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron.

Ochozias consults Beelzebub.

They had not proceeded far on their way when they were met by the prophet Elias, who bade them return and tell their master that because he had sent to inquire of Beelzebub, as if there were no God in Israel, his hurt should prove fatal, nor should he ever leave his bed alive. On hearing this, the king was filled with rage, and asked what manner of man he was who had thus dared to stop them. From their description of the prophet as "a hairy man, with a girdle of leather about his loins," Ochozias at once recognised the person of Elias, and straightway despatched one of his captains with a band of fifty men to find him and seize him. They discovered him sitting on the top of a hill; and when the captain called to him, "Man of God, the king hath commanded that thou come down," he answered: "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty." And so it happened. Finding that the men did not return, the king sent a second body composed of the same number; but they met with a similar fate. A third party having been sent, the leader fell upon his knees before Elias, and besought him to spare his life, and to accompany him to the king. By the command of God, Elias went with him and when he was brought into the presence of Ochozias he repeated to him what he had already spoken to the messengers. Ochozias died as had been foretold by Elias and left his crown to Joram, his brother.

Elias foretells the king's death.

It was shortly after the events recorded above that it pleased God to remove Elias from the world. Forewarned of what was about to take place, the holy prophet tried to

persuade his disciple, Eliseus, to remain behind at Galgal, while he himself went forward to Bethel. But Eliseus, who had a knowledge of what was to happen, could not be prevailed upon to stay, and said to Elias: "As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, I will not leave thee." As they were approaching Bethel, the sons of the prophets went out of the city to meet them, and coming near to Eliseus, they said to him: "Dost thou know that this day the Lord will take away thy master from thee?" To this Eliseus answered: "I also know it; hold your peace."

Eliseus refuses to part from Elias.

At Bethel, too, Elias in vain requested Eliseus to stay, and allow him to proceed alone to Jericho. They were met at Jericho by another company of the sons of the prophets, who desired Eliseus to tell them if he knew what was about to happen. Yet a third time did Elias beg of Eliseus not to proceed any further, saying that the Lord had sent for him to go as far as the Jordan. All to no purpose; so the two went on together. Fifty men, the sons of the prophets, also followed them at a distance, till the two stood on the bank of the river. Here Elias took off his mantle, and folding it, struck the river with it, whereupon the waters immediately parted, leaving a dry path to the opposite bank. No sooner had they both reached the other side than the waters closed and flowed on as before. Elias now turned to his faithful follower and said: "Ask what thou wilt have me to do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." Eliseus begged that he would bestow upon him his twofold spirit, the power of working miracles and of prophesying. Elias answered: "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, thou shalt have what thou hast asked; but if thou see me not, thou shalt not have it." And as they went on, walking and talking together, behold a fiery chariot and

Translation of Elias.

fiery horses separated them, and Elias was borne up to heaven in a whirlwind.

Grief of Eliseus.

Eliseus, seeing him thus raised up, cried out: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the driver thereof." To express his grief at being deprived of so excellent a master, Eliseus rent his garments; then taking up the mantle which had fallen from Elias, he put it on himself, and returned to the Jordan. Hoping to see the waters divide as they had done for Elias, he also struck them with the prophet's mantle, but without result. Still not discouraged, he struck them a second time, saying: "Where is now the God of Elias?" The waters instantly divided, and he passed over on dry ground.

Search is made for Elias.

The sons of the prophets who had come out from Jericho saw what had happened; and coming up to Eliseus, they prostrated themselves before him, and begged that fifty men might be sent to seek for Elias, whom the Spirit of the Lord might have set down on some mountain or in some valley. Urged by them, he at length gave his consent, and for three days the search was pursued; but in vain, for they found him not.

Eliseus purifies the water of Jericho.

During his stay in Jericho, Eliseus was visited by the chief men, who told him that the water of the city was bad and the soil barren. Obtaining from them a new vessel containing salt, he cast the salt into the spring from which the city was supplied, and the water was made sweet and the ground fertile.

Boys torn by bears.

From this city Eliseus proceeded to Bethel, the chief seat of the calf-worship. The inhabitants of this town were wicked and given up to idolatry, and had trained up their children to hate the true religion and its ministers. But, for an insult paid to

His servant, and to inspire them with a wholesome respect for Himself and His ministers, God punished them in a remarkable manner. Ascending by the slope which led to the town, Eliseus was met by a number of boys, who mocked him and called to him: "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Filled with zeal for religion, which in his own person was insulted by these boys, Eliseus turned to them, and called down punishment upon them. He had scarcely finished speaking when there rushed out of the forest two bears, which tore forty-two of them.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—JORAM, SON OF ACHAB, B.C. 896-884

Miracles of the Prophet Eliseus

Joram removes the statues of Baal.

Coming to the throne of Israel in the eighteenth year of Josaphat, king of Juda, Joram, the son of Achab and Jezabel, reigned twelve years in Samaria, having succeeded his brother Ochozias. It is said of him that he did evil before the Lord, but not to the extent done by his father and mother, for he took away the statues of Baal which his father had made; yet the golden calves set up by Jeroboam he did not remove.

Revolt of the Moabites. Joram's alliance with Josaphat.

The revolt of the Moabites from Israel caused Joram to seek the co-operation of Josaphat, in his endeavour to reduce Mesa, king of Moab, to subjection. Josaphat readily complied with his wishes, and sent this message to Joram: "I will come up; he that is mine is thine; my people are thy people, and my horses thy horses." Accordingly, the king of Israel and the king of Juda, in whose train was also the tributary king of Edom, led their armies by the desert of Edom. After a march of seven days, the

troops began to suffer and the beasts of burden to die from want of water. Learning that the prophet Eliseus was in the camp of Israel, Josaphat proposed that he should be called, that through him they might beseech the Lord to come to their assistance. When brought into the presence of the three kings, Eliseus turned to Joram and said: "What have I to do with thee? Go to the prophets of thy father and thy mother. As the Lord of hosts liveth, if I did not reverence the face of Josaphat, king of Juda, I would not have hearkened to thee, nor looked on thee: but now bring me hither a minstrel." When this was done, and the minstrel had begun to play, the prophet became inspired, and bade them dig trenches all about the valley, adding: "You shall not see wind nor rain; yet this channel shall be filled with waters, and you shall drink, you and your families, and your beasts: moreover, the Lord will also deliver Moab into your hands." According to the prophet's directions, trenches were dug that night; and early the next day it came to pass that, when the morning sacrifices were being offered in Jerusalem, water poured down from the hills, and the valley had the appearance of a large lake. It was now that the enemy marched into view, and as the sun's rays were reflected in the water, and cast a ruddy glare on all around, and as the Moabites knew that no water could be expected there at that season of the year, they concluded that what they saw was blood. Believing that the allied forces had turned their arms against one another, they raised the cry: "Go now, Moab, to the spoils." Echoing these words, they made a disorderly rush upon the camp; but what was their surprise when, too late, they found themselves face to face with their foe in battle array.

The three kings took advantage of the confusion in the enemy's ranks, and falling suddenly upon them, put them to utter rout, and pursued them with immense

slaughter right into the territory of Moab. Pillaging and destroying as they advanced, they came to the Moabite capital, Kir-haraseth, which they surrounded and tried to take by storm. With a chosen body of 700 men, Mesa endeavoured to cut his way out; but, foiled in the attempt, he was driven back into the city. The next time he was seen was on the city wall, where, in the sight of all, he offered his eldest son a burnt-offering to the Moabite god Chamos. Filled with horror at the sight, the allies raised the siege and departed into their own country.

'he Moabite ing sacrifices is son.

The wonderful miracles of Eliseus form the chief theme in the story of Joram's reign. We next read of his coming to the help of a poor widow, whose two sons were on the point of being sold as slaves by a hard creditor to defray her debts. In her distress, she went to Eliseus, and told him that nothing now remained to her but a little oil. Bidding her not to despair, he sent her to borrow of her neighbours as many empty vessels as she could, and told her to pour into them the oil she had left. She obeyed his instructions, and to her surprise found that the oil did not cease to flow till she had filled every vessel. Eliseus said to her: "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy creditor; and thou and thy sons live on the rest."

liseus rescues poor widow om debt.

In his travels through the land of Israel, Eliseus often passed through the town of Sunam, where he was hospitably received by a certain great and pious lady. She said to her husband: "I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often passeth by us. Let us, therefore, make a little chamber, and put a little bed in it for him, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, that when he cometh to us he may abide there." Wishing to repay her kindness, the prophet bade her ask any favour she would. Now she

e Sunamite man.

was childless, and earnestly desired that God might bless her with a son. Eliseus assured her that her wish should be fulfilled, and that, by that time the following year, a son should be born to her. And so it came to pass.

Eliseus raises her dead child to life.

When her child was grown to boyhood, and had on one occasion gone to the harvest field where his father was busy among the reapers, he was suddenly seized with such severe pains in the head that he had to be carried home, and died shortly afterwards on his mother's knee. Rising up, his sorrowing mother laid him on the prophet's bed, trusting that Eliseus would pity her distress and restore her son to her. Without delay, she set out for Mount Carmel, where the prophet then was, and casting herself at his feet, made known to him her sad loss. Moved with compassion, he turned to his servant Giezi, and said: "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go. If any man meet thee, salute him not; and if any man salute thee, answer him not; and lay my staff upon the face of the child." Eliseus himself then rose up and accompanied the woman; but before they reached Sunam they were met by Giezi, who told them that he had acted according to the prophet's directions, but that the child was not risen. Eliseus now entered the house, and following the example of Elias, stretched himself over the body, whereupon the boy gaped seven times and opened his eyes. Eliseus then called the woman and restored her son to her. Filled with gratitude for a favour so great, the woman poured out her heartfelt thanks for the mercy thus vouchsafed to her.

The poisonous food.

After this, Eliseus returned to Galgal at a time when there was famine in the land. One day the sons of the prophets sat before him listening to the instructions of their master, and Eliseus, not wishing to send them away hungry, ordered

one of his servants to set the great pot on the fire and to boil some pottage for them. Ignorant of the poisonous nature of the wild gourd, the servant shredded some into the contents of the vessel. But when those who had partaken of the pottage discovered what had happened, they exclaimed: "Death is in the pot, O man of God." Instantly Eliseus called for some meal to be brought; and when he had poured this into the pot he bade his followers eat without fear. To the surprise of all, the pottage was found to have lost its bitterness, and to be perfectly harmless.

The multiplication of the bread.

On another occasion, Eliseus distributed twenty small barley-loaves among 100 men, and all were astonished to find that, after every man had had his fill, there remained something over.

Naaman the Syrian.

We next come to the story of Naaman, the Syrian general, who, although in great favour with his sovereign, was yet stricken with the fearful disease of leprosy. Now among the attendants of Naaman's wife was a Jewish maiden who had been carried off captive from her people, and who had heard of the wonderful miracles wrought by the prophet Eliseus. Feeling for her mistress's distress on account of Naaman's affliction, she one day said to her: "I wish my master had been with the prophet that is in Samaria; he would certainly have healed him of the leprosy which he hath." Filled with hope, the lady immediately made known to Naaman what her Hebrew maid had said. Without loss of time he referred to king Benadad what he had heard, and was at once despatched by him as the bearer of rich presents to Joram, king of Israel, and with a letter for the king, couched in the following terms: "When thou shalt receive this letter, know that I have sent to thee Naaman, my servant, that thou mayest heal him of his leprosy."

Deeming the letter haughty, and thinking, doubtless,

that war might be the consequence of his inability to fulfil the demand, Joram was alarmed, and rent his garments, exclaiming: "Am I God, to be able to kill and give life, that this man hath sent to me to heal a man of his leprosy? Mark, and see how he seeketh occasions against me." This came to the ears of Eliseus, who sent a messenger to the king desiring that Naaman would come to him, so that he might know that there was a prophet in Israel.

Joram alarmed.

Soon a procession of horses and chariots was seen coming in the direction of Eliseus's dwelling; but while it was yet some distance off, Eliseus bade a servant go and tell Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan, after which his flesh would recover its health, and he would be made clean. Believing that Eliseus wished to insult him by sending such a message, Naaman was indignant, and turned back. "I thought," said he, "he would have come out to me, and would have invoked the name of the Lord, his God, and touching with his hand the place of the leprosy, would have healed me. Are not the Abana and the Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them, and be made clean?" His servants, however, entreated him to comply with the prophet's conditions, especially as he had not required a hard thing, but one that was easy of accomplishment. Naaman heeded their advice, and going down to the Jordan, washed seven times, according to the word of the man of God. On coming out of the water the seventh time, behold, he was made clean, and his flesh was as the flesh of a little child. Filled with gratitude for his wonderful recovery, he at once sought out the prophet and said to him: "In truth, I know there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel." He then offered him costly gifts, but the prophet refused to accept even

Naaman is cleansed of his leprosy.

the smallest present. Departing, Naaman took with him two loads of earth with which to erect an altar to the true God, being resolved no longer to worship the gods of his own country.

ezi is struck ith leprosy.

Eliseus's servant, Giezi, had been a witness of all that had passed, and wishing to possess himself of the riches which his master had refused, he stealthily left Eliseus and followed Naaman. When Naaman saw Giezi running towards them, he leapt down from his chariot and advanced to meet him, inquiring of him if all were well. "All is well," said Giezi, "but my master hath sent me to thee to ask for a talent of silver and two changes of garments, as two young men, sons of the prophets, have come to him from Mount Ephraim." Naaman was pleased with the request, and gladly gave him *two* talents and two changes of garments, and sent back two of his own servants to carry them for him. It was evening when Giezi returned, and dismissing the two men, he secretly stowed away his ill-gotten riches, quite unknown, as he thought, to his master. Having made everything secure, he went in, as usual, to attend on Eliseus, who asked him where he had been. Pretending astonishment, Giezi answered that he had not been out. "What," said Eliseus, "was not my heart present when the man turned back from his chariot to meet thee? So now thou hast received money and garments to buy olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants; but the leprosy of Naaman shall stick to thee and to thy seed for ever." And he went out from him a leper as white as snow.

seus makes n to float.

Soon after this, Eliseus was one day near the Jordan, when he found the sons of the prophets cutting down timber with which to build themselves a more commodious dwelling. As they were thus busily engaged, the head of one of their axes flew off

and fell into the river. The owner of the axe was much distressed on account of his loss; but Eliseus bade him cast a piece of wood into the water where the axe had disappeared, and when this had been done, the iron axe, to the astonishment of all, was seen to rise to the surface, and was recovered, to the great joy of its owner.

CHAPTER LXXXV

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, B.C. 896-884—JORAM, SON OF ACHAB (*continued*)

Death of Joram and Jezabel

Eliseus and the Syrians.

The Syrians did not long leave Israel in peace, but soon began to renew their predatory incursions, and would have succeeded in getting Joram into their power had it not been for the timely warnings of Eliseus. Whatever were the secret plans made by Benadad for ensnaring Joram, they were defeated by the king of Israel's being apprised of his intentions. In the end, Benadad began to suspect treachery among his own counsellors. "Why," said he, "do you not tell me who it is that betrays me to the king of Israel?" But when one of his servants told him that it was not they, but the prophet Eliseus who had made known even the words spoken in the king's privy chamber, Benadad inquired where the prophet abode, and being told in Dothan, gave orders for him to be seized without delay. Dothan, which lay about twelve miles north of Samaria, was by night surrounded by a strong body of men, so that when the servant of the prophet went out early in the morning, he was alarmed to see the city besieged by Benadad's forces, and returned in all haste to tell his master, exclaiming: "Alas, alas, my lord what shall we do?" Eliseus was in no way disturbed

but calmed the terror of his servant by assuring him that there were more to fight for them than against them. Then, at the prophet's prayer, the eyes of the servant were opened, and he beheld the whole mountain full of horses and chariots of fire, drawn up to protect Eliseus.

The Syrians now drew near to seize the man of God; but at his prayer they were struck with blindness, and while in this state were led to Samaria by Eliseus, who said to them: "Follow me, and I will show you the man whom you seek." When they were come into the city, and were completely at the mercy of the Israelites, Eliseus again besought the Lord, saying: "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." What was the surprise of the Syrians to find themselves in the midst of Samaria, cut off from the remotest chance of escape! Joram would have put them to death without mercy, but in deference to the prophet's request, he gave them food and sent them away unharmed to their master. For a long time after this the Syrians ceased their incursions into the land of Israel.

The Syrians ent to seize Eliseus are truck blind.

Yet Benadad had not completely laid aside his feelings of hostility, for once more we find him returning with all his forces to besiege Samaria. So close and so protracted was the siege that the people of Samaria were reduced to the direst extreme of famine. Even the bare necessities of life could not be procured except at enormous prices, an ass's head fetching so much as fourscore pieces of silver. The poor were reduced to the necessity of eating objects the most revolting. At length things came to such a pass that the king was called upon to settle a disputed case between two women, the mere contemplation of which fills us with horror. Turning to one of the women, Joram asked her to state the cause of the quarrel that had arisen between them, whereupon she said: "This woman and I agreed to boil

enadad sieges amaria.

our children for food, she promising that, if I boiled my child first, she would then bring hers and do likewise. Now, when we had eaten my son, she took her own and concealed him, nor will she fulfil her promise." On hearing this, the king was filled with grief and horror, and rending his garments for sorrow, rose up quickly and withdrew. When he again appeared before the people, it was seen that he wore hair-cloth next his skin.

Joram orders Eliseus to be put to death.

Humbled at first by the sufferings that had befallen himself and his people, Joram afterwards allowed himself to be carried away by feelings of bitter resentment against the prophet Eliseus, whom he accused of being the cause of all these calamities. At length, in a fit of desperation, he cried out: "May God do so and so to me, if the head of Eliseus, the son of Saphat, shall stand on him this day." Having thus given vent to his angry feelings, he at once despatched a messenger to carry out his cruel order, and himself followed quickly after.

Eliseus prophesies great plenty.

At this time Eliseus was sitting in his house surrounded by many of the ancients, and knowing in spirit what the king had commanded, he said to those about him: "Do you know that this son of a murderer hath sent to cut off my head? Look, then; when the messenger shall come, shut the door, and suffer him not to come in: for behold the sound of his master's feet is behind him." By the time the king reached the prophet's house his anger had had time to cool, and in his despair he said to Eliseus: "Behold, so great an evil is from the Lord: what shall I look for more from the Lord?" He was reassured, however, by Eliseus, who said to him: "Hear ye the word of the Lord: To-morrow, about this time, a bushel of fine flour shall be sold for a stater* in the gate of Samaria." Upon this, one of

* Same value as a sicle = 2s. 8d.

the officers accompanying the king exclaimed: "If the Lord should make flood-gates in heaven, can that possibly be which thou sayest?" Turning to him, Eliseus answered: "Thou shalt see it with thy eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

The siege miraculously raised.

That very night the Syrian camp was thrown into the wildest confusion, for the Lord had caused them to hear sounds as of chariots and horsemen, and as of a vast army coming up against them. In their alarm they said one to another: "Behold, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hethites and of the Egyptians, and they are come upon us." Then, under cover of the darkness, they fled in terror, leaving their tents and their horses and asses in the camp, desirous only of saving their lives.

Four lepers find the Syrian camp deserted.

That same night four lepers who chanced to be standing near the gates of Samaria said to one another: "What mean we to stay here till we die? If we enter into the city, we shall die of the famine; and if we remain here, we must also die. Come, therefore, and let us run over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare us, we shall live; but if they kill us, we shall but die." They accordingly started for the Syrian camp, and coming to where the outposts were supposed to be stationed, were astonished to find no one there. Taking courage, they advanced till they came in sight of the tents. Still seeing no man, they made bold to enter one of them, which to their surprise they found deserted, while all around was abundance of food, together with much gold and silver plate. They ravenously pounced upon the food, and when they had satisfied their cravings of hunger, they proceeded to collect as much gold and silver as each could carry. This they took away and concealed, after which they returned for more. As they returned laden with spoil, one of them said: "We do not well, for this is a day of good tidings. If we hold our

peace, and do not tell it till the morning, we shall be charged with a crime; come, let us go and tell it in the king's court." The proposal was adopted, and turning their steps in the direction of Samaria, they soon came to the city gate, where they found the guards, to whom they related all that they had seen and done.

Pillage of the Syrian camp.

The astonished sentinels straightway went to inform the king, who, although it was yet night, arose without delay, and said to his attendants: "I will tell you what the Syrians have done to us: they know that we suffer great famine, and therefore they are gone out of the camp, and lie hid in the fields, saying, 'When they come out we shall take them alive, and then we may get into the city.'" At the suggestion of one of his attendants, the king commanded two of his most trusted officers to take two of the five horses that still remained in the city and to reconnoitre the country as far as the Jordan. Before long they returned with the welcome tidings that not an enemy was to be seen, but that, to the very bank of the Jordan, the road which the Syrians had taken was strewn with garments and costly plate and weapons, which, in their hurry to escape, the enemy had cast away so as to expedite their flight. When Joram heard this, he was filled with joy, and permitted the people to go out and pillage the Syrian camp.

The prophet's scoffer crushed to death.

Soon they returned, every man laden with as much as he could carry; and the officer who had been stationed at the city gate to prevent the people from crushing one another was himself trampled to death by the crowd. This man was no other than the one who on the preceding day had scoffed at Eliseus; and thus, though he lived long enough to see the promised plenty, yet was he not permitted to partake of it. "Thou shalt see it with thy eyes, and shalt not eat thereof."

Eliseus and Hazael.

Filled with vexation at the deplorable failure of his expedition against Samaria, Benadad fell into a distemper, and his life began to be despaired of. Hearing that Eliseus was come to Damascus, the sick king sent his most trusted servant, Hazael, with many costly presents, to the prophet, to ask whether he would recover from his illness. Eliseus replied that, though Benadad's malady was not mortal, he would nevertheless die. He then shed bitter tears at the thought of the evils and terrible miseries that this same Hazael would inflict on the children of Israel. Hazael, struck with astonishment, asked why he wept. "Because I know," said Eliseus, "what thou wilt do. The strong cities of Israel thou wilt burn with fire; their young men thou wilt kill with the sword; thou wilt dash to death their children, and mutilate their women." Hazael replied: "Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?" Eliseus then told him how God had made known to him that he should one day become king of Syria.

enadad suffocated by azael.

Hazael now took leave of Eliseus, and returning to Benadad, bade him be of good cheer, for the man of God had promised that he should recover. Next day, however, as Hazael was in attendance on the king, he took a wet blanket, and drawing it tightly over his face, suffocated him. He then assumed the sovereignty.

ram's alliance th Ochozias, g of Juda.

When Joram heard of the death of Benadad, he thought the opportunity a favourable one for recovering from the Syrians the city of Ramoth-Galaad. In this undertaking he was accompanied by Ochozias, the son of Joram, king of Juda, but, being severely wounded during the attack on the city, he withdrew to Jezrahel to have his injuries attended to, and was there visited by Ochozias. Their absence from the army hastened the destruction of both.

When compelled to retire on account of his wound, Joram had left one of the captains of his army, named Jehu, to command in his stead. It was now that Eliseus instructed one of the sons of the prophets to hasten to Ramoth-Galaad, and to anoint Jehu, the son of Josaphat, the son of Namsi, to be king over Israel. Calling Jehu from among the captains of the army, the prophet retired with him into an inner room, and taking out the oil of anointing, poured it upon his head, saying: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: 'I have anointed thee king over Israel, the people of the Lord. Thou shalt cut off the house of Achab, and I will avenge the death of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezabel. I will destroy all the house of Achab, and I will make it like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, and like the house of Baasa, the son of Abias. And the dogs shall eat Jezabel in the field of Jezrahel, and there shall be no one to bury her.'" Having thus fulfilled his task, he fled, and Jehu returned to the other captains.

Jehu is anointed king.

Being pressed to say on what errand the prophet had come, Jehu told them all that had happened, upon which they hastened to spread their cloaks as a carpet under his feet, after the manner of a judgment-seat, and then in sight of the whole army they sounded the trumpet and cried out: "Jehu is king!"

Jehu is accepted by the army.

Jehu's first care was to give instructions that no one was to be allowed to leave Ramoth-Galaad, lest news of what had happened might secretly be carried to Joram; then, with a small escort, he set out in his chariot for Jezrahel. His approach was seen by a watchman stationed on one of the towers This man at once announced the fact to Joram, who

Jehu sets out for Jezrahel.

despatched a horseman to meet the party, and to ask whether their coming meant peace. Jehu replied: "What hast thou to do with peace? Go behind, and follow me." Finding that the messenger did not return, Joram sent out another with like instructions; but this one also, at Jehu's command, fell behind and followed after. By this time the little party had approached near enough to be recognised by the watchman, who said to those near him: "The driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Namsi, for he drives furiously."

Death of Joram.

Believing, no doubt, that Jehu had come as the bearer of important news from Ramoth-Galaad, Joram and Ochozias called for their chariots, and went out to meet him as far as the field of Naboth. To Joram's inquiry if his intentions were peaceful, Jehu made answer: "What peace, so long as the wickedness of Jezabel, thy mother, and her many sorceries flourish?" Suspecting treachery, Joram at once wheeled about his chariot, and calling to Ochozias to do likewise, fled in all haste towards the city; but an arrow from Jehu's bow struck him between the shoulders, and penetrating his heart, killed him on the spot. Then, addressing Badacer, his captain, Jehu said: "Take him, and cast him into the field of Naboth, for I remember when I and thou, sitting in a chariot, followed Achab, this man's father, that the Lord laid this burden upon him." In alarm Ochozias took to flight, but was overtaken and severely wounded at Gaver. Still continuing his flight, however, he succeeded in reaching Mageddo, where he died. His body was conveyed to Jerusalem, and he was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers in the city of David.

Jehu now proceeded to Jezrahel; and when his coming was made known to Jezabel, she painted her face and adorned her head; and looking out from her window as Jehu passed by, she cried out to him: "Can there be peace for

Zambri, who killed his master?" Jehu looked up, and seeing who it was that addressed him thus, commanded the eunuchs who attended her to throw her headlong from the window. They did not hesitate, but hurled her down into the street below, so that the wall was bespattered with her blood, while Jehu's horses trampled on her mangled corpse. After Jehu and his followers had refreshed themselves, he said to his men: "Go and see after that cursed woman, and bury her, because she is a king's daughter." But when the men came to bury her they found nothing but the skull, the feet, and the extremities of her hands, for the dogs had carried off or devoured all the rest. Thus was the prediction of Elias fulfilled.

Death of Jezabel.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—JEHU, B.C. 884-856

Jehu's accession was marked by the slaughter of Achab's descendants. As there were still left seventy sons of Achab in Samaria, Jehu sent a letter to the chief men of the city and to the ancients, ironically bidding them choose out the best of their master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for the house of Achab. Jehu knew his power; but the ancients were filled with fear for their own safety, and said one to another: "Behold, two kings could not stand before him, and how shall we be able to resist?" They therefore sent to Jehu, saying: "We are thy servants: whatsoever thou shalt command us to do we will do; we will not make us a king: do thou all that pleaseth thee." A second letter from Jehu was the reply. "If you be mine," he wrote, "and will obey me, take the heads of the sons of your master, and come to me to Jezrahel by

Slaughter of Achab's seventy sons.

to-morrow at this time." His commands were faithfully carried out, and next day saw two ghastly piles of human heads heaped up on either side of the city gate.

The descendants of Achab sought out and slain.

Seeing that the ancients were now equally responsible with him for the death of Achab's sons, and that they had rendered themselves equally odious to the people, he called an assembly and spoke thus: "If I conspired against my master and slew him, who hath slain all these?" Jehu next set himself to hunt out and slay all that were left of the family of Achab, together with their chief supporters among the ancients and the priests. He was on his way to Samaria, there to take up his residence, when he met, at the Shepherd's Cabin, forty-two of the kinsmen of Ochozias, king of Juda, who, ignorant of what had happened, were coming on a visit to the king at Jezrahel. Being told who they were, Jehu bade his followers seize them and slay them at the well beside the Cabin. Not one of them was allowed to escape.

Jonadab the Rechabite.

He had not advanced much further on his journey when he met Jonadab, the son of Rechab, whom he invited to get up beside him in his chariot, and to come and see his zeal for the Lord. This same Jonadab was a holy personage, afterwards famous as the founder of the Rechabites, a sort of religious concerning whose rule we thus read in the Prophecy of Jeremias: "We will not drink wine, because Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying: 'You shall drink no wine, neither you nor your children, for ever: neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any: but you shall dwell in tents all your days. . . .'" (Jer. xxxv. 6, 7). Jehu knew how important it was for him to obtain the approbation of a man so highly revered by the people as Jonadab. He accordingly took him with him into

Samaria, where he slew to a man all that were to be found of Achab's family, according to the word of the Lord spoken by Elias.

The worship of Baal to be uprooted.

The next task Jehu undertook was to uproot the worship of Baal, and to leave no trace of it in his kingdom. With this object in view, he proclaimed a great festival in honour of the false god, and artfully concealing his real design, thus addressed the assembled people: "Achab worshipped Baal a little, but I will worship him more. Now, therefore, call to me all the prophets of Baal, and all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting, for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal: whosoever shall be wanting shall not live."

Slaughter of Baal's worshippers.

The summons was faithfully obeyed, and on the appointed day the temple of Baal was filled from end to end. None but the votaries of the god were allowed to enter; and, that no one might be allowed to escape in the confusion, each was required to clothe himself in the sacred vestments used in the service of Baal. Jehu also, in company with Jonadab, went into the temple, having first of all disposed four score armed men near the gates, with instructions to let no one escape on peril of their lives. The sacrifices were begun; and while the attention of all was taken up with the ceremonies, Jehu gave the signal to the soldiers, who rushed forward and slaughtered Baal's followers to a man. The bodies of the slain were cast out, the statue of Baal was brought from the temple and broken to pieces, the temple itself was destroyed, and its site given up to the meanest uses.

For his zeal in uprooting the worship of Baal, and the fidelity with which he had carried out God's decree against the family of Achab, Jehu received the promise that he and his children should sit upon the throne of Israel to

the fourth generation. Yet Jehu failed to walk with all his heart in the law of the God of Israel, for he did not forsake the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan. This wicked policy, which was designed to prevent his subjects from submitting again to the kings of Juda, proved his ruin. His sins soon brought their merited chastisement; for Hazael, king of Syria, taking advantage of disturbances on the west of the Jordan, began to dismember the provinces on the east, and to commit the horrible ravages foretold by Eliseus.

srael afflicted y the Syrians.

After a reign of twenty-eight years Jehu died, and was succeeded by his son Joachaz, B.C. 856.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—ATHALIA AND JOAS, B.C. 884-839

ATHALIA, B.C. 884-878.—For six years did the young Joas, the only surviving son of Ochozias, remain in his place of concealment in the Temple, his very existence being unsuspected by the wicked Athalia. But when the boy was seven years old, Joiada, the High Priest, took into his confidence five captains of hundreds, with whom he made a covenant, and to whom he entrusted the charge of gathering together the Levites out of all the cities of Juda, and the chiefs of the families, who in answer to his summons assembled at Jerusalem. When they had all made a covenant with the young Joas, the High Priest said to them: "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the son of David." To insure the success of his undertaking, he chose the Sabbath, when the Levites were wont to replace one another, so that many might assemble

Joiada brings out the restoration of Joas.

without suspicion. After assigning the accustomed guards to the royal apartments, he told off double that number to keep watch round the person of Joas; and having supplied them with the spears and shields consecrated to the Lord by king David and his valiant men, he drew them up before the altar from the right to the left side of the Temple, and charged them to slay any man who should venture to enter the sacred precincts. The rest of the people were to remain unarmed in the outer courts. All was now ready. The young prince was brought forward, the Book of the Law was put in his hand, the crown was placed upon his head, and Joiada anointed him with oil and made him king. The ceremony ended, a joyous acclamation arose from the multitude, and all the people cried out: "God save the king."

Joas is proclaimed king.

The shouts of the people reached the ears of Athalia, who at once hastened to the Temple to discover the cause. There she found the king with the royal crown upon his head, and the people rejoicing and the trumpets sounding. Filled with alarm, she rent her garments, exclaiming: "A conspiracy, a conspiracy!" When Joiada saw her, he turned to the centurions, and commanded them to lead her without the precincts of the Temple and slay her; at the same time he bade them strike down any man who should attempt to follow her. His orders were carried out, and thus this true daughter of Jezabel paid the penalty of her cruel usurpation. In the death of Athalia, the family of Achab came to an end, and all the people of the land rejoiced.

Athalia is slain.

JOAS, B.C. 878-839.—The covenant entered into by their fathers was now renewed by all the people. Joiada, as mediator between God, the king, and the people, engaged the two latter to be faithful to their common Lord, and

to each other. Both parties promised to observe the laws, and, on condition of their doing so, the High Priest gave them the assurance that God would protect them. The temple of Baal was next invaded; the altars were torn down, and the images of the god dashed to pieces, while Matham, the priest of Baal, was slain before his own altar. The regulations which David had commanded to be kept in regard to the Temple, and which had of late been ill observed, or entirely neglected, were renewed, and guards were set to prevent anything unclean from coming into the House of God. The young Joas was conducted in solemn procession by the way of the gate of the shield-bearers into the palace, and was set on the throne of the kings.

Renewal of the covenant.

Joas was seven years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned forty years. For more than twenty years of his reign, as long as Joiada lived, he did that which was right before the Lord; yet, through human policy, he refrained from removing the altars from the high places, which, though erected to the true God, were, as we have seen, contrary to His law.

Joas reigns well during the lifetime of Joiada.

Peace long reigned throughout the land. Left undisturbed by external foes, Joas turned his attention to the repairing of the Temple; and as Athalia had caused the sacred vessels to be carried off, he got together skilled workers in metal, and, with the offerings of the people, caused to be made vessels of gold and silver, and supplied whatever was wanting for the service of the Temple.

Restoration of the Temple.

At length Joiada died in the 130th year of his age, and, for the great services he had rendered to the kingdom of Juda and to the house of David, was buried in the city of David among the kings.

Death of Joiada.

Great was the change that was soon to come over Joas. Deprived of his wise counsellor and father, he fell into the hands of wicked flatterers, who exerted over him such an influence for evil that before long we find him not only forsaking the worship of the God of his fathers, but abandoning himself to the most abominable idolatries. The worship of Baal was again publicly set up, and the threats of Divine vengeance denounced by the prophets were scoffed at and set at naught.

Joas abandons himself to idolatry.

Filled with zeal for the honour of God, Zacharias, the High Priest, son of Joiada, thus boldly addressed the people: "Why transgress you the commandment of the Lord which will not be for your good, and why have you forsaken the Lord to make Him forsake you?" His courage won for him the martyr's crown; for Joas, forgetful of all that he owed to the family of Joiada, had him led into the court of the Temple and there stoned to death.

Martyrdom of Zacharias.

But God was not to be mocked. Not a year had passed from the death of Zacharias when news was brought to Joas that the Syrian army, under Hazael, was marching against Jerusalem. To oppose Hazael, Joas mustered a much larger army than that commanded by the Syrian king; but Juda was routed, and Jerusalem itself was saved from plunder only by the surrender of the sacred vessels of the Temple, and of all the silver that was to be found in the treasury of the House of God and in the king's palace. Of the idolatrous princes who had by their evil counsel led Juda astray, some were slain in battle, and others fell into the hands of Hazael. All received the punishment due to their crimes.

Juda invaded by the Syrians.

When the Syrian army departed, Joas was prostrated by sickness; and it was while thus confined to his bed

that two of his servants, to revenge the blood of the son of Joiada, fell upon him and slew him. He was buried in the city of David, but not in the royal sepulchres of his forefathers. He was succeeded by his son Amasias, B.C. 839.

oas is slain by is servants.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—JOACHAZ AND JOAS, B.C. 856-825

The Last Acts and Death of the Prophet Eliseus

Joachaz, B.C. 856-839.—It was in the twenty-third year of the reign of Joas, king of Juda, that Joachaz, son of Jehu, mounted the throne of Israel. He reigned at Samaria seventeen years. He followed the evil courses of Jeroboam; and for his sins God allowed him to suffer from the ravages of the kings of Syria till the forces of Israel were reduced so low that they numbered in all but 50 horsemen, 10 chariots, and 10,000 footmen.

he Syrians vage Israel.

Humbled by these disasters, Joachaz besought the Lord to help him; and in answer to his prayer a deliverer was raised up in the person of his son Joas, who, during the last two years of his reign, was associated with him in the kingdom.

as associated th his father the kingdom.

Joas, B.C. 839-825.—Joas reigned in all sixteen years, having been raised to share the kingdom with his father, in the thirty-seventh year of Joas, king of Juda. Although, like his father, he followed in the evil ways of Jeroboam, God nevertheless chose him as His instrument to snatch Israel from the burden of Syrian oppression.

It was in the reign of Joas that the prophet Eliseus was seized with his last illness; and the king, learning how in-

firm he had become, hastened to his bedside. Seeing him feeble and worn, Joas was moved to tears, and in the fulness of his heart exclaimed: "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the guider thereof." This act of piety on the part of the king met with its reward. Eliseus promised him victory over his enemies, and, by prophetical signs, foretold to him against whom he should be victorious. He bade Joas open the window looking east, and shoot an arrow in the direction of Galaad, which was at that time occupied by the Syrians. While Joas was in the act of bending the bow, the prophet laid his hand on that of the king, and, as the arrow sped from the bow, said: "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of the deliverance from Syria: thou shalt strike the Syrians in Aphec, till thou consume them." Eliseus next told Joas to strike upon the ground with an arrow. Thrice Joas did so, but because he had not struck oftener, Eliseus was displeased, and said: "If thou hadst smitten five or six or seven times, thou hadst smitten Syria even to utter destruction; but now three times thou shalt smite it."

Last illness of Eliseus.

Soon after this, his last prophecy, Eliseus, at the age of 90, died and was buried (B.C. 838); but his miraculous power did not end with the tomb, for, even after he had been buried, we read of another miracle wrought by his remains. The tomb of Eliseus was in a spacious cave, the entrance to which was secured by a stone according to custom. Some time after this, when the body of a man was being borne out for burial, the funeral party was surprised by the sudden appearance of a roving band of Moabites. In haste the stone was removed from Eliseus's tomb, and the corpse thrown into the same recess that contained the remains of the prophet. No sooner did the body touch the relics

Miracle wrought by the remains of Eliseus.

of the prophet than the dead man came to life again, and stood up.

Victories of Joas.

Full of confidence in the promises made to him by Eliseus, Joas went to war with Benadad III., the son of Hazael, and recovered from him the cities which Hazael had taken. Three times did victory attend the arms of Joas, as the prophet had foretold.

Jerusalem taken by Joas.

Early in this reign, Amasias had succeeded his father Joas to the crown of Juda; and when he had gained a great victory over the Edomites, he sent messengers to Joas of Israel, challenging him to come out against him. To show Amasias how much he despised his boastful threats, Joas returned the following cutting reply: "A *thistle* of Libanus sent to a *cedar-tree* which is in Libanus, saying: 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife'; and the beasts of the forest that are in Libanus passed, and trod down the thistle. Thou hast beaten and prevailed over Edom, and thy heart hath lifted thee up: be content with *this* glory, and sit at home; why provokest thou evil, that thou shouldst fall, and Juda with thee?" Amasias persisted in his foolish purpose, and the two kings met at Bethsames, a town in Juda. The battle ended in the utter rout of Juda. The army of Amasias was scattered, and he himself was made prisoner and conducted ignominiously to Jerusalem by Joas, who destroyed 400 cubits of the wall, took away all the treasures of the Temple and of the king's palace, and returned with numerous hostages to Samaria.

In B.C. 825 Joas died, and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA — AMASIAS, AZARIAS, AND JOATHAM, B.C. 839-742

AMASIAS, B.C. 839-810.—In the same year in which Joas became sole king of Israel, Amasias, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, succeeded his father Joas to the throne of Juda, and reigned twenty-nine years. It is written of him that he did what was good in the sight of the Lord, but yet not with a perfect heart. The murderers of his father he seized and put to death, but their sons he spared in obedience to the law of Moses, which says: "The fathers shall not be slain for the children, nor the children for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin."

Amasias punishes his father's murderers.

When about to enter on an expedition against Edom, which had revolted under Joram, he took into his pay 100,000 Israelites, whom he hired for 100 talents of silver. However, warned by a prophet, he dismissed these mercenaries, who returned to their own country burning with rage against Juda. In revenge for this slight, they spread themselves among the cities of Juda, several of which they attacked and plundered, killing as many as 3,000 men. Amasias, meanwhile, marched confidently as far as the Vale of Salt Pits, south of the Dead Sea, and there coming upon a large army of Edomites, made a successful attack upon them and slew 10,000 of them, besides making 10,000 prisoners. These were conducted to a certain steep rock, and cast down headlong from the top.

Victory over the Edomites.

On his return, Amasias set up the idols of the Edomites, and burnt incense to them, despite the warning of one of the prophets. In answer to his reproof, the king replied: "Art thou the king's counsellor? Be quiet, lest I kill thee." Going from the

Amasias is overthrown by Joas.

king's presence, the prophet said: "I know that God is minded to kill thee, because thou hast done this evil, and, moreover, hast not hearkened to my counsel." God's chastisement was not long in overtaking him, for it was shortly after this that, puffed up with the victory he had gained over the Edomites, he sent his boastful challenge to Joas, king of Israel, with the lamentable result already narrated in the last chapter.

Amasias is slain by his own people.

Amasias survived Joas fifteen years; but in the last year of his reign a conspiracy was set on foot against him in Jerusalem, and he was compelled to flee for refuge to Lachis. Even here he was not safe. His retreat was discovered, and he was slain, and his body conveyed to Jerusalem, where it was buried among the kings. His son Azarias succeeded him.

Prosperous reign of Azarias.

Azarias (or Ozias), b.c. 810-758.—In the fifteenth (?) year of the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, Azarias, at the age of sixteen, ascended the throne of Juda. During his long reign of fifty-two years he was contemporary with five kings of Israel, viz., *Jeroboam II.*, *Zacharias*, *Sellum*, *Manahem*, and *Phaccia*. For many years his reign was one of unbroken prosperity, and he showed himself one of the ablest of the kings of Juda, doing that which was pleasing before the Lord, though he did not destroy the high places. Guided by the wise counsels of the prophet Zacharias—probably the son and successor of the martyr of that name—he raised his kingdom to a high degree of greatness, and by his many victories made his name famous even to the very borders of Egypt. But at last, forgetting the instructions of Zacharias, he opened his heart to pride, and having arrogated to himself the rights of the Priesthood, prepared for himself a miserable end.

Among the many noble deeds of this king are mentioned his victories over the Philistines, the Arabians, and the

Ammonites. He destroyed the walls of Geth, of Jabina, and of Azotus, and mindful of the revolt of the Philistines under Joram, built strong fortresses throughout their country. That portion of the wall of Jerusalem demolished by Joas he repaired, and erected towers over the corner gate and over the gate of the valley. He moreover furnished the towers of the city and the corners of the walls with military engines for shooting arrows and great stones. This is the first mention of such artillery in the Sacred Scriptures. For the protection of the shepherds he built towers in the wilderness, and dug many wells, "for he had much cattle, both in the plains and in the waste of the desert: he had also vineyards and dressers of vines in the mountains and in Carmel: for he was a man that loved husbandry."

His successful wars.

At length, elated with the pride of power, and forgetting that it was God alone to whom he owed his prosperity, he in his folly usurped the priestly functions, and presumed to offer incense upon the altar. With a holy zeal for God's service, the High Priest Azarias, with eighty other priests, followed the king, and remonstrating with him, besought him to desist from so rash a purpose, saying: "It doth not belong to thee to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests—that is, to the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated for this ministry: go out of the sanctuary, do not despise: for this thing shall not be accounted to thy glory by the Lord God."

Azarias invades the priestly office.

Filled with anger at being thus rebuked, the king threatened the priests with violence; but that very instant he felt the hand of God upon him. He was struck with a leprosy which never left him to the day of his death. The moment the priests saw the leprosy in his forehead they ran forward to

Azarias dies a leper.

thrust him out of the Temple. But he did not need to be driven out; in his fright he was himself anxious to withdraw, "because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord." During the remaining six years of his life he dwelt in a house apart, and resigned the government into the hands of his son Joatham. When at length Azarias died, because he was a leper they did not bury him in the royal sepulchres, but in the field attached thereto. Joatham succeeded him, B.C. 758.

Good and prosperous reign of Joatham.

JOATHAM, B.C. 758-742.—This good and virtuous king came to the throne in the second year of Phacee, king of Israel, and enjoyed a most prosperous reign of sixteen years. Besides repairing and beautifying the high gate of the Temple, Joatham made additions to the walls of Jerusalem. The Ammonites, who were again at war with Juda, were defeated and compelled to pay an annual tribute. Dying B.C. 742, he was succeeded by his son Achaz.

CHAPTER XC

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL—JEROBOAM II., ZACHARIAS, SELLUM, MANAHEM, PHACEIA, AND PHACEE, B.C. 825-739

THE PROPHET JONAS

Jeroboam, the most prosperous king of Israel.

JEROBOAM II., B.C. 825-784.—The fourth king of the house of Jehu was Jeroboam II., who came to the throne of Israel on the death of his father Joas. His long reign of forty-one years began in the fifteenth year of Amasias, the son of Joas, king of Juda, and among all the kings of Israel none was more prosperous than he. Though Jeroboam followed the sinful customs of his predecessors, God was moved by the affliction of Israel, and sent them as a saviour this valiant

king, who not only repulsed the Syrians and seized their capital, Damascus, but restored to Israel the whole of their former dominion from Emath to the Dead Sea.

The prophet Jonas commanded to go to Ninive.

The prophet Jonas, the son of Amathi of Geth, of the tribe of Zabulon, by whose mouth God had promised victory over her enemies to Israel, was now sent to the city of Ninive, the capital of the great empire of Assyria, to announce its approaching destruction if the people did not repent of their sins. Jonas was the only one among the prophets who was sent to preach to the Gentiles, and, as we shall see, prefigured in his own person the death and resurrection of Christ. "Arise," God said to him, "and go to Ninive, the great city, and preach in it, for the wickedness thereof is come up before Me."

Jonas is cast into the sea.

Disheartened by the difficulty of the undertaking, and shrinking from a duty so fraught with danger, Jonas sought by flight to escape from fulfilling the Divine command, and went to Joppe, where he found a ship on the point of sailing for Tharsis. He embarked at once, and having paid the fare, went down into the inner part of the ship, and soon fell into a deep sleep. But hardly had they set sail when so great a storm arose that the ship was in danger of sinking, and the sailors in their fear cried aloud to their gods to help them; but the storm, instead of abating, grew more and more violent. Then the ship-master came to where Jonas was sleeping, and rousing him, said: "Why art thou fast asleep? Rise up and call upon thy God, if so it be that God will think of us, that we may not perish." At last it was resolved to cast lots to find out who was the cause of the evil that had come so unexpectedly upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonas. When they asked him whence he came, and what he had done, he replied that he was a Hebrew and a prophet of God, and that if they wished to

save themselves from shipwreck they must take him up and cast him into the sea. "For," said he, "I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Struck by his candour, the mariners were at first unwilling to carry out his suggestion, and strove by vigorous rowing to return to land, but in vain. The danger became each moment more threatening, until, in imminent peril of being engulfed, they cast him overboard, and at once the sea became calm.

onas is wallowed up y a great fish.

Yet God would not suffer Jonas to perish, and sent a great fish, which swallowed him up alive; but after three days and three nights the monster threw him up unhurt upon the shore. A second time the word of the Lord came to Jonas, saying: "Arise, and go to Ninive, and preach in it as I bid thee." No longer unheedful of the command given him, Jonas immediately proceeded to Ninive, and entering the city, cried out in a loud voice: "Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed." His words filled the citizens with alarm; and the king, hearing of the threatened destruction of Ninive, descended from his throne, and in sackcloth and ashes proclaimed a general fast. "Let every man," said he, "be converted from his evil way; for who can tell whether God may not turn from His fierce anger and forgive us, and we may not perish?"

d spares nive.

Touched by their tears of sincere sorrow, and moved to compassion by their cries for mercy, God did not carry out the judgment which He had inspired His prophet to pronounce against them, but spared them.

ef of Jonas.

Jonas now became exceedingly troubled lest he should pass for a false prophet, and prayed to the Lord to take him out of life. Going out of the city, he made a booth out of the branches of trees for a protection against the scorching rays of the sun, and

there, on the east side of the city, waited to see what would befall Ninive. Now during the night God caused an ivy to grow up which spread its leaves over the booth which Jonas had made, thus forming a cool shade for the prophet; but the following morning a worm struck the ivy and it withered. When the sun rose there came a hot burning wind, and the prophet was so overwhelmed with the fierce heat that in his affliction he besought the Lord to let him die rather than live. Then God said to him: "Thou art grieved for the ivy for which thou hast not laboured, nor made it to grow: in one night it came up, and in one night it perished. And shall not I spare Ninive, that great city, in which there are a hundred and twenty thousand persons that know not how to distinguish between their right hand and their left, and many beasts?"

Jonas a figure of our Saviour's death and resurrection.

In this history who would have thought that Jonas was a figure of our Saviour's death and resurrection, if our Saviour Himself had not declared it? (Mat. xii. 39, 40). Jonas had been ordered to preach, but did not comply till after his escape; the Gospel was designed to be preached to the Gentiles, yet Christ would not have it done till He had risen. Jonas was cast into the sea to save those on board; Christ died for the redemption of mankind. The prophet came out of the fish alive, as Christ did from the tomb.

Jeroboam's long reign came to an end in B.C. 784, after which the kingdom of Israel fell into a frightful state of anarchy.

Zacharias assassinated by Sellum.

ZACHARIAS, B.C. 772.—It is generally supposed that after the death of Jeroboam II. there was an interregnum of eleven and a half years, at the end of which time Zacharias, the son of Jeroboam, mounted the throne, in the thirty-eighth year of Azarias, king of Juda. His reign was but of short

duration, lasting only six months, when he was assassinated by the usurper Sellum, the son of Jabes. Zacharias was the fourth in descent from Jehu, and the promise that the descendants of Jehu should reign to the fourth generation was now fulfilled.

Sellum slain by Manahem.

SELLUM, B.C. 772.—This king had been on the throne but one month when he in his turn was displaced by Manahem, general of Zacharias, who, to avenge his royal master's death, marched with his troops from Thersa, and coming suddenly upon Samaria, slew Sellum and occupied the throne himself.

Manahem destroys Thersa and Thapsa.

MANAHEM, B.C. 772-761.—Manahem, the son of Gadi, began his reign with a deed of great cruelty, destined, no doubt, to strike terror into all whose intention it might be to oppose him. Returning from Samaria to Thersa, he found the city gates closed against him; and when at length he had compelled the inhabitants to open them to him he wreaked a terrible revenge, destroying the city and slaughtering all that were in it, even the women and children, in the most barbarous manner. Thapsa, too, and all the country lying between the two cities he destroyed with fire and sword, inflicting upon all, both young and old, the most inhuman cruelties.

First invasion of Israel by Assyria.

In this reign commenced those attacks from the Assyrians which were to end so disastrously for Israel. Phul, king of Syria, made an expedition against Manahem; but the latter, instead of meeting him in the field, offered him a bribe of 1,000 talents of silver to withdraw his forces. Phul accepted the gift and retired. To raise the required money Manahem imposed a tax of 50 sicles of silver on all the great and rich in his kingdom.

When Manahem died, in B.C. 761, his son Phaceia came into peaceful possession of the throne.

PHACEIA, B.C. 761-759.—It was in the fiftieth year of Azarias, king of Juda, that Phaceia succeeded to the crown of his father.

Phaceia slain by Phacee.

Like his predecessors, he followed in the wickedness of Jeroboam, son of Nabat, and his inglorious reign of two years was brought to a violent close by one of his captains, Phacee, the son of Romelia, who slew him in Samaria and usurped the throne.

PHACEE, B.C. 759-739.—Phacee's reign of twenty years dates from the fifty-second year of Azarias, king of Juda, and the same story of wickedness is told of him as of the other kings of Israel—*he did that which was evil before the Lord.*

Phacee and the Syrian king besiege Jerusalem.

Towards the end of his reign he formed an alliance with Rasin, the king of Syria, and together they invaded Juda. Jerusalem itself was besieged; but so vigorous was the defence that they were unable to take it, and had to depart after devastating the surrounding country and killing or carrying off vast numbers of the inhabitants. The captives, however, were subsequently restored by the advice of the prophet Oded.

Israel again invaded by the Assyrians.

But in the last year of his reign his own dominions were invaded by Theglathphalasar, king of Assyria, who, after subduing Syria, overran Nephtali and Galaad, and carried off into Assyria the chief inhabitants as captives.

Phacee deposed and slain by Osee.

Phacee's reign was fast coming to a close, and the one who was destined to succeed him as Israel's last king was already forming deep-laid plots for his destruction. This was Osee, the son of Ela, one of his own subjects, by whom he was deposed and assassinated.

CHAPTER XCI

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—ACHAZ, B.C. 742-726

THE twelfth king of Juda was Achaz, who, at the age of 20, and in the seventeenth year of Phacee, king of Israel, succeeded his father Joatham. He reigned sixteen years at Jerusalem.

Gross idolatries of Achaz.

This wicked king plunged into the grossest idolatries of the surrounding nations, even going so far as to offer his own son as a burnt-offering to Moloch, in imitation of the Chanaanites: "he sacrificed also, and burnt incense on the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." But God's judgments were soon to overtake him.

War with Israel and Syria.

It was at this time that Phacee, king of Israel, in conjunction with the Syrian king Rasin, invaded Juda and marched against Jerusalem. Rasin succeeded in carrying off much booty to Damascus, while Phacee, in a great battle slew 120,000 men and afterwards led away 200,000 women and children to Samaria; but these, as we have seen in the last chapter, were liberated and conveyed back again, in obedience to the warnings of the prophet Oded. "Hear ye my counsel," said he, "and release the captives that you have brought of your brethren, because a great indignation of the Lord hangeth over you."

Prophecy of Isaias.

To this period belongs the celebrated prophecy in which the birth of Christ is so clearly foretold. Before Jerusalem was besieged, the great prophet Isaias was sent to encourage Achaz and to promise the miraculous birth of the Messias: "Behold," said he, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel;" and, to convince him the more, he foretold that the two kings

should be destroyed before his own son should be able to say *father*.

Achaz the vassal of the king of Assyria.

Yet, instead of placing his confidence in God, even after Isaias had given him such assurance from the Lord, Achaz now applied for help to Theglathphalasar, king of Assyria, offering himself as his vassal, and sending to him as a present all the gold and silver treasures from the Temple, and whatever riches he himself possessed. This powerful king readily accepted his proposal, and marching at once on Damascus, soon succeeded in putting an end to the Syrian kingdom thereby slaying Rasin and carrying away the inhabitants to Cyrene. He next turned his arms against Phacee, king of Israel, and ended by wresting from him not only his northern territories, but all his possessions lying to the east of the Jordan. The result of these conquests was what is known as the First Captivity of Israel, for the Assyrian king led captive the inhabitants of the cities he had conquered; and thus began that fatal exodus which, for its crimes and idolatries, was to put an end for ever to the kingdom of Israel.

First captivity of Israel, B.C. 740.

An altar to the Syrian gods set up in the temple.

The assistance of Assyria had been bought at a dear price, for now that the war was over, Achaz had to appear in person at Damascus to do homage to Theglathphalasar for his kingdom. So blind and infatuated had Achaz become that to his former abominations he even added the awful crime of erecting in the very precincts of the Temple itself an altar to the Syrian gods, after the pattern of one he had seen at Damascus. At his command the brazen altar of God's House was removed, and this unholy substitute raised up in its stead; for he said: "The gods of the kings of Syria help them, and I will appease them with victims, and they will help me." Even Urias, the

High Priest, did not hesitate to do the king's bidding when he commanded him to offer upon his altar the morning holocaust and the evening sacrifice, and the king's holocaust and his sacrifice, and the holocausts and sacrifices of the whole people of the land. Achaz next caused altars to be erected at all the corners of Jerusalem, and in all the cities of Juda on which to burn incense; but by doing so he provoked the Lord, the God of his fathers, to wrath.

Death of Achaz.

He was cut off at the early age of 36, and buried in Jerusalem, though not in the sepulchres of the kings. He was succeeded by his son Ezechias, who became as renowned for his piety as his father had been for his wickedness.

CHAPTER XCII

OSEE, THE LAST KING OF ISRAEL, B.C. 730-721—DESTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM, B.C. 721

After nine years' anarchy Osee secures the crown.

OSEE, the slayer of king Phacee, after many years of anarchy, succeeded in establishing himself on the throne, in the twelfth year of king Achaz, and reigned the last king of the doomed kingdom of Israel. We read of him that he did evil before the Lord, but *not* as the kings of Israel that had been before him. Yet under this less wicked king the nation was destroyed, as their crimes had reached their height, and Osee had not sufficient virtue to avert any longer the stroke of Divine justice.

Salmanasar invades Israel.

Hardly had Osee become firmly seated on the throne when Salmanasar, the king of Assyria, invaded his kingdom, and so far reduced it that Osee was compelled to pay tribute, and to acknowledge himself a vassal of the Assyrian king. Determined

to throw off the yoke, Osee secretly sent messengers to Sua, the king of Egypt, to beg assistance against the Assyrians; but before the necessary help was forthcoming, Salmanasar was made aware of his intentions and resolved on striking a terrible blow against Israel.

Fall of Samaria: captivity of the Ten Tribes.

He threw an army round Samaria; but it was not till after a three years' siege that the city at length fell a prey to the ferocity of its enraged conquerors. It was probably during the siege of Samaria that Salmanasar died, and the final overthrow of the devoted city was left to his successor, Sargon. When at length it fell, in the ninth year of the reign of Osee, and the sixth of Ezechias, Osee was loaded with chains and cast into prison, while, to prevent further revolts, the people of Israel were collected together, and as captives were led away into the distant territories of the Medes and Assyrians.

Samaria colonised by Cutheans.

The captive Israelites afterwards became scattered over the northern parts of Asia. With the exception of one of their priests, neither they nor their children were destined ever to return to their country, which now was colonised by people from Babylon, Avah, Emath, and Sepharvaim, as well as from Cutha, so that the Samaritans were afterwards spoken of as Cutheans. These people brought with them their own superstitions and idolatries, and they feared not the Lord. But God was more offended with them when they exercised their idolatrous worship in the land which He had chosen in a particular manner for Himself than He had been by their idolatry in their own country, and, in punishment, sent among them lions, which killed great numbers of them. At length it was resolved to send messengers to the king of the Assyrians to say: "The nations which thou hast removed, and made to dwell in the cities of Samaria, know not the ordinances of

the God of the land, and the Lord hath sent lions among them." The king replied: "Carry thither one of the priests, whom you brought from thence captive, and let him go and dwell with them, and let him teach them the ordinances of the God of the land." Accordingly, one of the priests who had been carried away captive from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should worship the Lord. In this way these people came to unite the worship of the true God with that of idols, as had been done before by the Israelites: "And they made to themselves, of the lowest of the people, priests of the high places, and they placed them in the temples of the high places: and when they worshipped the Lord they served also their own gods, according to the custom of the nations out of which they were brought to Samaria."

Causes of Israel's downfall.

This, the SECOND CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL, took place in the year B.C. 721; and thus the separate kingdom formed out of the ten tribes by Jeroboam I. came to an end after a duration of 254 years. The doom which befell the people of this wicked kingdom was brought about by their own infidelities, and was a just punishment for their abominable idolatries concerning which they had been constantly warned by God's chosen prophets. Again and again had they been entreated to return from their wicked ways, and to keep the precepts and ceremonies according to the law which God had commanded their fathers: "and they hearkened not, but hardened their necks like to the necks of their fathers who would not obey the Lord their God. And they forsook all the precepts of the Lord, and made to themselves two molten calves, and groves, and adored all the host of heaven;* and they served Baal: and the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight."

* *The sun, the moon, and the stars.*

CHAPTER XCIII

THE VIRTUOUS TOBIAS

The virtues of Tobias.

THE Book of Tobias, compiled probably from records left both by the elder and the younger Tobias, preserves the account of domestic piety and wonderful virtues found in one of the many thousands led captive into Assyria, and gives us an example of the most extraordinary patience and of a perfect resignation to the will of God.

His early piety.

Tobias, who belonged to the tribe of Nephtali, was one of those unfortunate captives led into banishment after the fall of Samaria. From the days of his childhood he had been trained up in the path of virtue; nor did he in his captivity forsake the way of truth, but daily employed all the means in his power to relieve the wants and lessen the sufferings of his fellow-captives. In his youth, when his neighbours were in the habit of repairing to worship the golden calves of Jeroboam, he alone fled the company of all, and went up to the Temple at Jerusalem, there to adore the Lord God of Israel. On arriving at man's estate he married a woman named Anna, of his own tribe, who bore him a son, whom they named after his father and taught from his infancy to fear God and abstain from all evil. And when Tobias, along with all his tribe, was led captive to Ninive, while the rest ate of the forbidden meats of the Gentiles, he, unwilling to defile himself, touched them not.

Tobias assists Gabelus.

In reward for his piety God gave him favour with the Assyrian king, who permitted him to move about at his will and to act in what manner he thought best. Profiting by the opportunity thus afforded him, Tobias passed from place to place administering consolation and attending to the

wants of his fellow-countrymen. Being come to Rages, a city of the Medes, he there found among his kindred a poor man named Gabelus in great want. Tobias was moved with compassion for his distress, and being in possession of ten talents of silver, willingly lent them to Gabelus, taking, at the same time, a promissory note for the repayment of the debt.

His works of mercy.

The freedom thus granted to Tobias came to an end when Sennacherib ascended the Assyrian throne; for having lost his army in his attempt to lay siege to Jerusalem, Sennacherib adopted the cowardly device of wreaking his revenge on the captive Israelites and heaped upon them such cruelties as only rage and hatred could suggest. Many were cruelly put to death, and their bodies left in the streets without burial, until Tobias, out of charity and at great personal risk, went out among his kinsfolk, burying their dead, comforting the distressed, and distributing his goods according to the necessities of each. But when this came to the ears of Sennacherib, he was filled with rage, and gave instructions for Tobias to be slain and his property seized. Warned of his danger, the holy man fled with his wife and son, and, by lying concealed among his friends, succeeded in baffling the tyrant, till a violent death put an end to the cruel monster. Tobias then returned to his home, and to the peaceful possession of his property, which was now restored to him.

Tobias again goes out to bury the dead.

Not long after this, on the occasion of a great religious festival, Tobias, wishing to entertain his friends, prepared a great dinner, and calling his son, said to him: "Go and bring some of our tribe that fear God to feast with us." The young man made all haste to do his father's bidding, and on his return related how he had found a young Israelite lying slain in the street. Although many of the guests had

arrived and the dinner was already served, Tobias at once left the table, and coming to where the body lay, took it up reverently, and carried it to his house, so that he might bury it cautiously after sunset. In vain did his friends remonstrate with him on the danger to which his action exposed him, and said to him: "Once already commandment was given for thee to be slain because of this matter, and thou didst scarce escape the sentence of death, and dost thou again bury the dead?" The good man modestly replied that it behoved him to fear God rather than the king.

He loses his sight.

Once when he returned home more wearied than usual after performing his customary round of pious works, he threw himself down on the ground by the wall of his house to take a short rest in the shade. It was now that one of the greatest trials of his life befell him; for, while he lay thus, some dirt from a swallow's nest above him dropped into his eyes, and caused the loss of his sight. What an example of patience have we not presented for our edification and instruction when we are told that he repined not because of the evil of blindness that had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks all the days of his life! Even his friends went so far as to mock him, and asked: "Where is thy hope for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?" But Tobias meekly rebuked them, and said: "Speak not so; for we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him."

His patience under afflictions.

To his loss of sight there was soon added the further infliction of great poverty, in which Tobias had to depend for a livelihood on the labours of his wife Anna, who, by employing her hands in weaving, was enabled to gain a scanty sustenance for herself and her little household. On one occasion, by

means of her hard-earned savings, she bought a kid, which she joyfully led home with her as a surprise for her husband. Not knowing how the little animal had come into their possession, and unaware that his wife had sufficient money wherewith to buy it, the good man was troubled in his mind, and said to his wife: "Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen; restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft." At these words Anna was angry and bitterly scolded him, at the same time upbraiding him as being the cause of their present distress. Tobias did not reproach her, but patiently bore her chidings; then, with tears in his eyes, he uttered this prayer: "Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy judgments are just, and all Thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment: and now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences, nor those of my parents. Do with me according to Thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace; for it is better for me to die than to live."

CHAPTER XCIV

THE STORY OF TOBIAS (*continued*)

Tobias's exhortation to his son.

When Tobias was far advanced in years, believing his end to be near, he called his son that he might impart his last instructions to him. "Hear," said he, "the words of my mouth, my son, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart. When God shall take my soul, thou shalt bury my body: and thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life, being mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee: and when she also shall have ended her life, bury her by me. All thy days have God in thy mind, and take heed

thou never consent to sin. Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have a little, take care even to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity: for alms deliver from all sin, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it. Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. If any man hath done any work for thee, pay him his hire. See thou never do to another what thou wouldst not wish to have done to thee. Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments clothe the naked. Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times, and desire of Him to direct thy ways. Be not afraid, my son: we lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." The young man hearkened attentively to the words of his aged parent, and then replied: "I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me."

The money lent to Gabelus.

Tobias next informed his son of the ten talents of silver that he had long ago lent to Gabelus, and bade him prepare to set out for Rages to recover the loan. At the same time, having given him the promissory note, upon the presentation of which he assured him that Gabelus would immediately repay the debt, he told him to seek out some faithful companion who would accompany him to Rages and serve him as a guide.

Going out forthwith, the young Tobias was astonished to find a little distance away a comely youth girded, and

as it were, ready for a journey. He saluted him and said: "Whence art thou, good young man, and knowest thou the way that leadeth to the country of the Medes?" To this the stranger replied that he also was of the children of Israel, and not only knew the way to Rages, but was also well acquainted with a certain Gabelus who dwelt there. Astonished at his wonderful good fortune, the young Tobias hastened into the house to relate the glad news to his father. Being invited into the old man's presence, the stranger entered and said: "Joy be to thee always!" to which Tobias made reply: "What manner of joy shall be to me who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?" Bidding him be of good courage, because his cure from God was at hand, the young man told him that his name was *Azarias* (*Help of God*), and promised not only to conduct his son to Rages, but to bring him safe home again. Soon all was ready for their departure; and after bidding farewell to his father and mother, the young Tobias set out with the stranger. No sooner had her son disappeared out of sight than his mother, filled with grief, exclaimed: "I wish the money for which thou hast sent him had never been: for our poverty was sufficient for us, that we might account it as riches that we saw our son."

The young Tobias sets out for Rages.

The two travellers on their first day's journey came as far as the Tigris; and while the young Tobias was in the act of bathing his feet in the river, a monstrous fish suddenly made its appearance, and darted towards him as though to devour him. His companion, attracted by his cry for help, told him to seize the fish by the gills and draw it ashore; and, when this had been done, to open it and take out its heart, gall, and liver, which were to be kept as useful medicines. They then roasted part of the fish to be eaten at once,

Young Tobias in danger of being devoured.

and salted as much of the rest as would serve them till they came to Rages.

Sara, the daughter of Raguel.

Tobias now proposed that they should seek out some abode in which to spend the night; whereupon Azarias informed him that at Ecbatana, which was only a short distance away, dwelt a man named Raguel, a near kinsman of Tobias, who had an only daughter, Sara, whom Tobias should ask in marriage. At this Tobias was grieved, for he had heard it said of this same Sara that she had already been given in marriage to seven husbands in succession, each of whom, on account of his unworthy dispositions, had been killed by the devil on the very night of his marriage. Tobias dreaded that the like misfortune might overtake him, and that his death would bring his aged parents with sorrow to the grave. But he was consoled by the words of Azarias, who, after instructing him in what way he should sanctify his marriage, added: "Hear me, and I will show thee who they are over whom the devil can prevail. For it is over those who in such manner receive matrimony as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind that the devil hath power."

Meeting of young Tobias and Raguel.

According to the wish of Azarias, they proceeded to the house of Raguel, and were received with every mark of welcome. Though Raguel had never seen Tobias before, he remarked to his wife Anna: "How like is this young man to my cousin!" And on learning that his visitors were from Ninive, he eagerly inquired if they had met one of the name of Tobias, whose goodness and virtue were known to so many. Azarias replied: "Tobias, concerning whom thou inquirest, is this young man's father." Then did Raguel embrace the youth, and with tears in his eyes kissed him, and said: "A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous father." Anna

his wife and Sara his daughter also wept for joy on thus discovering who their visitor was.

The marriage of Tobias and Sara.

Raguel at once gave orders for a sheep to be killed and a feast to be prepared in honour of his guests; and when all was ready he invited them to sit down to table with him. But Tobias replied: "I will not eat nor drink here this day unless thou first grant me my petition, and promise to give me Sara thy daughter in marriage." Upon this, Raguel was very much troubled in mind, remembering what had happened to the other young men who had aspired to Sara's hand; and fearing the like fate awaited his relative, he remained in doubtful suspense without venturing a reply. The silence was broken by Azarias, who said to Raguel: "Be not afraid to give her to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her." Raguel was convinced by these words, and taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: "The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and may He join you together, and fulfil His blessing in you." The marriage contract was then written out, and they made merry, blessing God.

Tobias observes the stranger's instructions.

Mindful of the words of Azarias, Tobias carefully observed each particular of the instructions given him, and that same night said to his wife Sara: "Let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day; for we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God." Fearing that what had already happened in the case of Sara's former husbands might have happened to Tobias, Raguel rose early in the morning, and ordered a grave to be got ready; but on learning soon afterwards that his son-in-law was safe and unhurt,

he immediately caused the grave to be filled, and one and all praised God, and gave full vent to their feelings of joy and gladness.

Gabelus comes to the marriage feast.

Anxious though the young Tobias was to return to his father's house, Raguel entreated him to remain with him two weeks longer, promising to give him, at the end of that time, half of all that he possessed as his daughter's dowry, and after his own decease and that of his wife Anna, the rest also of his substance. In his trying position, Tobias consulted with his friend; and, after owning his indebtedness to him for all the care he had bestowed upon him, besought him that he himself would proceed to Rages to transact the necessary business with Gabelus, and to invite him to come and share in their rejoicings. Gladly did Azarias accede to the request, and with equal joy did Gabelus repay the loan of his benefactor. In a few days Azarias returned to Ecbatana, accompanied by Gabelus, who, at the sight of young Tobias, was overcome with joy, and with tears in his eyes called down the blessing of God upon him and his young bride.

The farewell.

When the time came to take a last farewell, with mingled feelings of regret and tenderness, Sara's parents kissed her, and dismissed her with their blessing, admonishing her to honour her father-in-law and her mother-in-law, to love her husband, to take care of the family, to govern the house, and in all things to act blamelessly. They next wished God-speed to Tobias and his companion, and the little company started out for Ninive.

The return of young Tobias.

Meanwhile the parents of Tobias were in anxious doubt regarding the safety of their son. His mother, Anna, growing disconsolate, could not be comforted, but daily went to the top of a neighbouring hill, in the hope that she might see him

coming afar off. One day, as she sat watching from the top of the hill as usual, she thought she could descry him in the distance, and returning in all haste to her husband, she cried out joyfully: "Behold thy son cometh!" Without a moment's delay the aged man rose up and tried to run to meet him, but stumbling along, would have fallen had not a servant taken him by the hand to support him. As the young Tobias hastened along, Azarias said to him: "As soon as thou shalt come into thy house, forthwith adore the Lord thy God; and giving thanks to Him, go to thy father and kiss him; then with this gall of the fish, which thou carriest with thee, anoint his eyes." The dog which had accompanied the travellers now ran on before, and, as though he had brought the good news, showed his joy by fawning upon them and wagging his tail. Tobias followed close after, and was soon in the embraces of his loved parents.

The elder Tobias recovers his sight.

When the first joy of their meeting was over they all sat down, and the young Tobias, in obedience to the advice of Azarias, produced the gall of the fish, and with it anointed his father's eyes. Soon a film, like the skin of an egg, began to come out of them; and when this had been removed, the sight of the good old man was restored. After they had poured out their gratitude to God for such wonderful mercies, the young Tobias related all that had happened to him from the time of his starting out on his journey, including the circumstances of his marriage with Sara, who was following after, accompanied by her servants, and bringing with her the dowry which her father had given her, cattle and camels, and much money.

To reward Azarias for his services was their next concern. In enumerating their many motives for gratitude, Tobias

said to his father: "He conducted me and brought me safe again, he received the money of Gabelus, he caused me to take my wife, he gave joy to her parents, myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish, thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him for all these things? I beseech thee, my father, to ask him to accept one half of all the things that have been brought."

The stranger's kindnesses enumerated.

Gladly was the proposal received; but when the suggestion was made known to Azarias he took the two aside, and then only did he make known to them who he was: "Bless ye the God of Heaven," he said; "give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you. I discover, then, the truth unto you, and I will not hide the secret from you. When thou didst pray with tears and didst bury the dead, I offered thy prayer to the Lord. And when thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee: and now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee and to deliver Sara, thy son's wife, from the devil; for I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord." When they heard these words they were troubled, and, filled with awe, fell prostrate before God's messenger. But Raphael said to them: "Peace be to you; fear not: for when I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye Him and sing praises to Him." When he had finished speaking he disappeared from their sight.

The stranger is no other than the angel Raphael.

After recovering his sight Tobias lived forty-two years in great joy and happiness of heart, and at length died in peace, at the good old age of 102 years. While his son and his grandsons were gathered around his bed to take their last farewell, he blessed them; and after exhorting them to piety and to

Death of Tobias.

fidelity to God's holy law, he predicted the destruction of Ninive, which prophecy his son saw verified twenty-three years afterwards: he also foretold the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The younger Tobias remained at Ninive only till his mother's death, when, gathering together all his substance, he set out with his wife and children to the house of his father-in-law, Raguel. Here he lived to the age of 99 years, and—such is the influence of good example—"all his kindred and all his generations continued in good life, and in holy conversation, acceptable both to God and to men, and to all that dwelt in the land."

CHAPTER XCV

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—EZECHIAS, B.C. 726-698

The Prophet Isaias

Ezechias, the successor of Achaz.

In the third year of Osee, king of Israel, Ezechias came to the throne of Juda as the successor of his wicked father, Achaz. His mother was Abia, a descendant, it is supposed, of the High Priest Zacharias, who was stoned to death in the reign of Joas. He reigned twenty-nine years at Jerusalem, and was 25 years of age when he became king.

Ezechias's zeal for religion.

Of Ezechias it is said: "He did that which was good before the Lord according to all that David, his father, had done. He destroyed the high places, and broke the statues in pieces, and cut down the groves, and broke the brazen serpent which Moses had made; for, till that time, the children of Israel burnt incense to it." Formerly this image of the brazen serpent had been treated with due respect, but now that the people made a god of it, he caused it to be broken, and in contempt called it Nohestan (*a little brass*).

He purifies the Temple.

At the very commencement of his reign he set himself resolutely to the task of rectifying the abuses of Achaz. The doors of the Temple, which his father had closed, he caused to be re-opened and repaired; then assembling the priests and the Levites, he bade them be sanctified, that they might purify the House of the God of their fathers. When all was ready, the ancient ceremonies were restored, and Ezechias sent messengers to all Israel, as well as to Juda, to proclaim: "Ye children, turn again to the Lord, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you that have escaped the hand of the king of the Assyrians: serve the Lord, the God of your fathers, and the wrath of His indignation shall be turned from you." Throughout Juda the response to this summons was general, but the greater part of the other tribes derided the messengers. However, many from the tribes of Aser, Manasses, and Zabulon, yielding to the counsel, came to Jerusalem to unite with Juda in celebrating the great solemnity of the Passover. From seven days the feast was prolonged on this occasion to fourteen, amid such joy as had not been in that city since the days of king Solomon. Then the priests and Levites rising up, the former blessed the people: "and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to the holy dwelling-place of heaven."

Idolatry blotted out.

Ezechias took advantage of this outburst of religious zeal to urge the people to abolish every vestige of idolatry still to be found in the land; so that, no sooner was the great solemnity ended, than the people hastened to break down the idols and demolish the high places: they destroyed the altars, not only in all Juda and Benjamin, but in Ephraim also, and Manasses, after which all returned to their possessions and their cities. Thus, Ezechias, seeking to do the will of God with all his heart, did it and prospered.

With renewed hope he now set himself to the task of driving back the Philistines, who, in the reign of his father, Achaz, had spread themselves among the cities of the plains, and to the south of Juda. Boldly attacking them, he inflicted severe punishment on them, and not only recovered from them the cities they had taken, but pursued them with great slaughter as far as Gaza.

Ezechias defeats the Philistines.

Flushed with success, and confident in the Divine protection, he determined no longer to submit to the degradation which his father had brought upon the kingdom by making it tributary to the Assyrians, and refused the annual payment which Achaz had promised. The war, which was of necessity to follow, was deferred for a time owing to the attention of the Assyrians being directed against other and more pressing dangers.

He refuses to pay tribute to Assyria.

It was in the sixth year of Ezechias that Samaria was taken; but not till the fourteenth year of his reign were the Assyrian forces, under Sennacherib, directed against Juda. One by one the fenced cities of Juda fell before the Assyrian, until Ezechias, becoming alarmed for the safety of Jerusalem itself, sent messengers to Sennacherib, who was then engaged in besieging Lachis, a city in the south-west of Juda, and offered to submit to him. "I have offended," he said, "depart from me; and all that thou shalt put upon me I will bear." In reply, Sennacherib demanded as the price of his withdrawal 300 talents* of silver and 30 talents of gold, which sum so taxed the resources of Juda that Ezechias was compelled not only to divest the Temple and his own palace of their treasures, but even to strip the gates and pillars of the Temple of all the plates of gold with which he himself had caused them to be adorned.

Sennacherib invades Juda.

* A silver talent=£400, a gold talent=£6,000.

The lull was but of short duration; for, some two years later, Sennacherib again invaded Juda and laid siege to Lachis, whence he despatched three of his chief officers, with a strong force, to demand the instant surrender of Jerusalem.

Sennacherib demands the surrender of Jerusalem.

The words which they were commanded to address to Ezechias were most haughty and insulting: "What is this confidence wherein thou trustest? Dost thou trust in Egypt, a staff of a broken reed, upon which if a man lean, it will break and go into his hand, and pierce it? So is Pharao, King of Egypt, to all that trust in him. But if you say to me: 'We trust in the Lord our God': is it not He whose high places and altars Ezechias hath taken away? Is it without the will of the Lord that I am come up to this place to destroy it?" The chief messenger next turned to the people who stood upon the wall, and in a loud voice thus addressed them: "Let not Ezechias deceive you: neither let him make you trust in the Lord. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered their land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Have they delivered Samaria?" The people returned no answer; but when the vaunting words of the Assyrian messengers were reported to Ezechias, he rent his garments, and covering himself with sackcloth, went into the House of the Lord, there to seek comfort in prayer. When he rose up, he sent to the prophet Isaias, to whose prayers he recommended his kingdom, and whose counsel he sought in his great trial. The holy prophet's answer was reassuring: "Thus saith the Lord: 'Be not afraid for the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of the Assyrians have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a spirit upon him, and he shall hear a message, and shall return into his own country, and I will there make him fall by the sword.'"

When the Assyrians returned, they found that their

king had already left Lachis, and was besieging Lobna, a city a little further to the north-east. Before he could bring about the surrender of Lobna, Sennacherib was somewhat disconcerted by tidings that Theraca, the king of Ethiopia, was marching against him, and in haste despatched to Ezechias a letter couched in the most blasphemous terms, requiring the immediate surrender of the city. Again Ezechias had recourse to prayer, and taking the letter he spread it out before the Lord, saying: "O Lord God of Israel, who sittest upon the cherubim, Thou alone art the God of all the kings of the earth: Thou makest heaven and earth: incline Thine ear, and hear all the words of Sennacherib. Of a truth, O Lord, the kings of the Assyrians have destroyed nations, and they have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, of wood and stone, and they destroyed them. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord, the only God."

Sennacherib's blasphemous letter to Ezechias.

So earnest and humble a prayer could not fail to be heard, and again Isaias was sent to Ezechias to assure him that God Himself would protect Jerusalem, and that Sennacherib should return by the way he had come. That same night an angel of the Lord, passing through the camp of the Assyrians, slew 185,000 men. When Sennacherib arose in the morning he was filled with alarm at beholding so many dead covering the ground; and collecting what troops remained, he withdrew in haste and departed for Ninive, his capital. Nor did the Divine vengeance cease to pursue him even here; for while he was in the act of offering sacrifice to his god Nesroch he was slain by his own sons.

An angel destroys the Assyrian army.

Recovery of Ezechias from sickness.

Not only did God save Ezechias and his people from the power of Sennacherib, but He also blessed them with great prosperity; and Ezechias was magnified in the sight of all nations, and congratulations and presents flowed in upon him. However, it pleased God to send another severe trial to His servant. The king fell so dangerously ill that his life was despaired of, and Isaias warned him to set his affairs in order and prepare to die. On hearing this, Ezechias wept, and earnestly besought the Lord not to cut him off, but to prolong his life for awhile. His prayer was heard; for hardly had Isaias departed from the palace, when the word of God came to him bidding him return to the king and inform him that fifteen years should be added to his life, and that in three days he should go up to the Temple. The king asked for a sign, whereupon Isaias answered: "Wilt thou that the shadow on the dial of Achaz go forward ten lines, or that it go back so many degrees?" Ezechias chose the latter sign, and at the prophet's prayer the shadow went back ten degrees from the point to which it had already reached. Isaias then took some dried figs which he placed on the sore from which the king suffered so severely, and the disorder was miraculously removed.

Embassy from the king of Babylon.

To congratulate Ezechias on his recovery, an embassy arrived at Jerusalem bearing letters and rich presents from Berodach Baladan, king of Babylon. Rejoiced at being honoured by so great a prince, Ezechias took a vain delight in showing the ambassadors all the treasures of the royal palace, and in addition the gold and silver vessels of the Temple, which chiefly drew down upon him God's displeasure. For his vanity he was rebuked by Isaias, who foretold to him that the time was near at hand when these same treasures should be carried away into Babylon, and his sons should become servants in the court of the Babylonian

king. This, however, was not to happen in the lifetime of Ezechias, the remainder of whose reign was passed in peace and prosperity. He died B.C. 698, and was succeeded by his son Manasses.

CHAPTER XCVI

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—MANASSES AND AMON, B.C. 698-641—MANASSES, B.C. 698-643

The Story of Judith

Long reign of Manasses.

The reign of Manasses is the longest recorded in the annals of Juda, commencing as it did B.C. 698, when he was but a boy of 12 years, and continuing through the long period of fifty-five years.

His wickedness.

This king not only undid all that his father had done towards restoring the worship of God and putting down idolatry, but by his infamous idolatries he even surpassed the abominations of his wicked grandfather, Achaz, and introduced every form of idol-worship practised by the surrounding nations. He restored the high places which Ezechias, his father, had destroyed; he set up altars to Baal, and made groves, as Achab, the king of Israel, had done; "and he adored all the hosts of heaven, and served them." To his false gods he set up altars in the two courts of the Temple of the Lord, and even the Ark was taken away to make place for the idol of the impure deity Astarte. In honour of Moloch, the god of the Ammonites, he made his sons pass through fire in the valley of Benennom: "he observed dreams, followed divinations, gave himself up to magic arts, had with him magicians and enchanters: and he wrought many evils before the Lord, to provoke Him to anger."

To warn Manasses, God sent many holy prophets, and

through them pronounced this terrible doom: "I will bring evil upon Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them, both his ears shall tingle; and I will efface Jerusalem as writings upon tablets are wont to be effaced, and I will erase and turn it, and draw the pencil often over the face thereof. And I will leave the remnants of My inheritance, and will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, because they have done evil before Me, and have continued to provoke Me from the day that their fathers came out of Egypt, even unto this day." To these threats of Divine vengeance Manasses not only turned a deaf ear, but even waged so violent a persecution against God's messengers, that the streets of Jerusalem ran with innocent blood. Tradition informs us that, in his mad rage, the king had the aged and saintly Isaias put to death, causing him, for his greater torment, to be sawn in two by a wooden saw.

God's threats.

Such wickedness was not to go long unpunished; for soon after the events just narrated, we read how the Assyrians, having invaded Juda, succeeded in taking Manasses captive, and carried him bound with chains and fetters to Babylon, of which Asarhaddon, one of the most powerful of all the Assyrian kings, had made himself master, and where he had fixed his residence some five years before. At length, brought to reflect on his guilty life by reason of his bitter sufferings and the degradation to which he now found himself reduced, Manasses in deep humility called upon the Lord to pity him in his distress, and to pardon his transgressions.

Manasses is led captive to Babylon.

His repentance was sincere; and God, moved to compassion by his earnest prayer, not only forgave him, but restored him to his kingdom. His first concern after returning to Jerusalem was to repair, as far as possible, the evils which, by his folly, he had brought upon the kingdom, and to

He is restored to his kingdom.

restore the worship of the true God. He took away the strange gods and the idol out of the House of the Lord, and commanded Juda to serve the Lord, the God of Israel. He also strengthened Jerusalem, and placed garrisons in the strong cities of Juda. When his end came he died in peace, and was buried, not in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own gardens.

Amon is slain by his own servants.

AMON, B.C. 643-641.—Manasses was succeeded by his son Amon, who, coming to the throne at the age of 22, reigned only two years. This wicked king followed the former bad example of his father, but failed to imitate him in his repentance. He was cut off in his wickedness by his own servants, who slew him, and buried him in his father's sepulchre in the garden of Oza. His son Josias, who was then 8 years old, succeeded him.

Holofernes.

BOOK OF JUDITH.—The transactions related in the Book of Judith belong probably to the time of the captivity of Manasses. The book takes its name from that illustrious woman by whose virtue and fortitude the children of Israel were preserved from the destruction threatened against them by Holofernes, who with his vast army was sweeping westward, bent on conquering all the kingdoms that lay in his way and bringing them into subjection to his master, the Assyrian king, Nabuchodonosor. This Nabuchodonosor was not the king of Babylon who took and destroyed Jerusalem, but another of the same name who reigned in Ninive. The kings and princes of all the cities and provinces of Syria, Mesopotamia, Lybia, and Cilicia, sent their ambassadors to Holofernes offering the most abject submission, if only their lives might be spared.

When the people of Juda heard of the danger that threatened, dread and horror seized upon their minds, lest Holofernes should do to Jerusalem and to the Temple of

the Lord as he had done to other cities and their temples; and, that they might not be taken unprepared, they at once set to work to strengthen their fortifications, and to gather corn and provisions into their cities. Nor did they trust to themselves alone, but putting on sackcloth as a sign of penance, they cried to the Lord with great earnestness, and humbled their souls by fasting and prayer. Going among the people, the High Priest, Eliachim, addressed them in these words of encouragement: "Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in His sight. Remember Moses, the servant of the Lord, who overcame Amalec, that trusted in his own strength, and in his power, and in his army, and in his chariots, and in his horsemen, not by fighting with the sword, but by holy prayers." Moved by his exhortation, they begged of God with all their heart that He would visit His people.

Preparations to resist Holofernes.

When it was told to Holofernes that they were making preparations to resist his advance, he was transported with fury and indignation, and inquired who these people were that dared to oppose his will. Thereupon, Achior, the Ammonite general, who was then in the Assyrian camp, sketched for him the history of the Jewish nation from the earliest times; spoke of the power of their God, and His wonderful protection of them when they remained faithful to Him; and how no one had been able to triumph over them except when they had forfeited the friendship of their Lord by departing from His worship. So enraged was Holofernes at these words that he would have slain him for his presumption, but instead of putting him to death on the spot, he loaded him with chains and conveyed him to Bethulia, there to await his doom with the rest of the inhabitants when the city should fall.

Achior's account of the Jewish nation.

Achior and the Bethulians.

The Bethulians were filled with astonishment when Achior was brought into their midst, and begged him to relate the cause of his being sent to them bound in fetters by the Assyrians. He complied with their request, and when he had finished speaking, the people comforted him with the promise: "The God of our fathers, whose power thou hast set forth, will make this return to thee, that thou shalt rather see the destruction of the Assyrians. And when the Lord our God shall give this liberty to His servants, let God be with thee also in the midst of us."

CHAPTER XCVII

HOLOFERNES BESIEGES BETHULIA

Bethulia.

Bethulia was a strong fortress situated some seven miles to the north-east of Samaria. Owing to the strength of its position, Holofernes led against this important stronghold a vast army of 120,000 foot and 22,000 horse, and proceeded at once to lay siege to it. The sooner to bring about the surrender of the city, the Assyrians cut the aqueduct; and as they had also got possession of the springs which supplied Bethulia with water, the inhabitants were soon reduced to the most desperate straits. Within the next twenty days the cisterns in the town began to fail, and only a small pittance of water was daily measured out to the people. Their courage at length gave way to despair, and on every side murmurs were heard against their leaders, whom they upbraided as being the cause of their present distress in not having, from the first, yielded to the demands of Holofernes. Ozias, who was in command of the town, did all in his power to raise the drooping spirits of his people, bidding them be of good courage,

and promising that, if at the end of five days succour were not forthcoming, he would comply with their demand, and surrender to Holofernes.

Judith's discourse with the ancients.

It was at this critical moment that Judith appeared on the scene. She was a holy widow who, from the time of her husband's death, had lived a life of the strictest retirement, having withdrawn to a private room in the upper part of her house, where, with her maids, she spent her hours in penance and prayer. Besides being a woman of great wealth and beauty, she was renowned among all for her virtuous life, nor was there any one that spoke an ill word against her. When it became known to her that Ozias had consented to give up the city if, within five days, there came no help to them from the Lord, she sent for the elders Chabri and Charmi and spoke thus to them: "Who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but rather that may stir up wrath and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed Him a day according to your pleasure. Rather let us humble our souls before Him, and let us ask Him with tears, that according to His will so He will show His mercy to us." She then informed them that she had formed a plan by which she hoped to be able to deliver the city, and begged them to pray that God might strengthen her design. She then dismissed them.

Departure of Judith.

After praying for success on her undertaking, she laid aside her widow's garments, and adorning herself in her richest apparel, directed her steps towards the city gate, in company with her maid, who carried a bottle of wine and some provisions for their journey. At the gate she was met by Ozias and the ancients, who allowed her to pass out without questioning her; and as she went forth they prayed that the God of

their fathers might give her grace, and strengthen all the counsel of her heart.

udith is taken efore Holo- ernes.

Descending the hill at daybreak, she was stopped by the Assyrian guard, and conducted to the tent of Holofernes, who received her with much kindness and courtesy, and bade her declare the object of her coming. Judith answered: "God is so offended that He hath sent word by His prophets to the people that He will deliver them up for their sins. And because the children of Israel know they have offended their God, thy dread is upon them: but I, thy handmaid, knowing this, am fled from them." Her words pleased Holofernes, who gave her permission to go in and out at will for three days, and allotted her a tent for herself and her maid. Each night she went forth into the valley of Bethulia, where she washed herself in the fountain, and as she returned she prayed that the God of Israel would direct her way to the deliverance of His people.

olofernes is ain by Judith.

On the fourth day Holofernes made a great feast for his officers, and invited Judith also to be present. She gladly accepted the invitation, thinking that the opportunity might be a suitable one for the accomplishment of her secret resolution. She accordingly decked herself out in her most costly attire, and displaying her ornaments to the best advantage, proceeded to the banquet. Holofernes gave himself up to the pleasures of the feast, and drank so deeply that, when night came on, he had no sooner cast himself down upon his couch than, overcome with the wine, he fell into a heavy sleep. The officers withdrew from his tent, and Judith and her maid alone remained. Bidding the maid stand without and watch, Judith prayed earnestly, and with many tears besought God to strengthen her arm. Then rising from her knees, she advanced to the head of

the bed on which Holofernes lay, and drawing his sword from the scabbard, took him by the hair, and with two strokes cut off his head. With some of the hangings of the bed she hurriedly wrapped up the bleeding head and gave it to her maid, bidding her put it in her wallet. Unchallenged, the two now passed through the camp, as if to go and pray in the Vale of Bethulia, according to their custom on previous nights, but they tarried not till they stood before the gate of the city.

Judith returns to Bethulia.

Calling to the watchmen upon the walls to open to her, Judith exclaimed: "God, who hath shown His power in Israel, is with us." No sooner was it noised through the city that Judith was again in their midst than the inhabitants, both young and old, flocked to meet her, for they had abandoned all hope of her return. When silence had been restored, Judith thus addressed them: "Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. And by me, His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy, which He promised to the house of Israel; and He hath killed the enemy of His people by my hand this night." She then took the head of Holofernes out of the wallet, and holding it up before the multitude, called on them to give thanks to God for the victory He had granted them through her, and for having given His angel to be her keeper, who had not only guarded her from sin, but had brought them deliverance from Holofernes. Ozias and all the people were loud in proclaiming the praises of Judith; and Achior, the Ammonite, when he beheld the head of the cruel tyrant, fell down at the feet of his deliverer, and recognising the hand of God in all that he had witnessed, he abandoned his idolatry, and became an earnest and faithful convert to the true religion.

At break of day the men of Bethulia, seizing their

arms, sallied out of the city gate, and with loud din and shouting hastened in the direction of the Assyrian camp. Alarmed by the sudden noise, and astonished at seeing the Bethulians issuing from the town, the Assyrians hastened to the tent of their general, and called to his chamberlains: "Go in and awake him, for the mice, coming out of their holes, have presumed to challenge us to fight." When the chief attendant approached his master's bed, he stood for a time before the curtains, clapping his hands; but, not receiving any response, he ventured to draw them aside, when lo! he beheld the headless trunk of Holofernes weltering in blood. With a loud wail he rushed from the tent, crying that Holofernes had been slain and his head severed from his body.

The Bethulians attack the Assyrians.

Great was the consternation among the Assyrians. Fear seized upon all; and in the most helpless confusion they rushed this way and that, not knowing whither to turn or what to do. To add to their terrors, the men of Bethulia were upon them. In the utmost disorder they sought safety in flight, but were pursued and slain without mercy. In haste Ozias sent messengers to the neighbouring cities, asking them to come out without delay and join in putting to rout their once dreaded foe. So great was the booty taken on this occasion that from it all the people of Bethulia were made rich, thirty days being scarcely sufficient for gathering it up. Great was the rejoicing in the city; and Joachim, the High Priest, with all the ancients, came from Jerusalem to Bethulia to see Judith, who was, they said, the joy of Israel and the glory of Jerusalem and of their people.

The Assyrians are seized with panic.

For three months the victory was celebrated with great joy; but Judith, although her fame had gone through all

the land, withdrew to her own house, and having set her servant free, spent the rest of her days in retirement and prayer. Only on festival days did she appear in public, when all vied in doing honour to her who had by her fortitude delivered them from the power of the Assyrian. When at length she died, at a very advanced age, she was mourned by all the people for seven days.

Virtuous life and death of Judith.

CHAPTER XCVIII

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—JOSIAS, B.C. 641-610

One of the three most excellent kings of Juda* was Josias, the son and successor of the wicked Amon. He was only eight years old when he came to the throne, but his reign of thirty-one years is marked throughout by his zeal for God's service, and for his untiring energy in rooting out from his kingdom every vestige of idolatry, and in restoring in all its fulness the ancient ceremonial ritual enjoined by Moses. How faithfully he served his God, and how wisely he ruled, may be gathered from the following passage in Holy Writ: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David, his father: he turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left."

Religious zeal of Josias.

The birth of this prince had been foretold long before in the reign of Jeroboam I. by "the disobedient prophet" who, seeing the king standing and burning incense at the altar in Bethel, exclaimed: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord God: 'Behold a child shall be born to the house of David,

Birth of Josias long foretold.

* *David, Ezechias,* and *Josias.*

Josias by name, and he shall immolate upon thee the priests of the high places, who now burn incense upon thee, and he shall burn men's bones upon thee'" (3 Kings xiii. 2). We shall see how literally this prophecy was to be fulfilled.

Idolatry uprooted.

When he was but twenty years of age, Josias set himself resolutely to the task of cleansing Juda and Jerusalem from the abominations which had been so wantonly practised in the reign of his father. He destroyed the high places and the groves, removed the idols and graven images, demolished the altars of Baal and the idols that had been set upon them, and strewed the fragments on the graves of those that had sacrificed to them. Then, seeing on the mount the sepulchres of the priests who had sacrificed to Jeroboam's golden calf, he gave orders for their bones to be dug up and to be burnt upon the altar, thus defiling it according to the word of the Lord which the man of God had spoken in the ears of Jeroboam.

The zeal of Josias did not end here. Following the directions of the priests and the prophets, he went through the cities of Manasses, Ephraim, Simeon, and Nephtali, and demolished the profane temples throughout the land of Israel.

The finding of the Book of the Law.

The king's next concern was for the Temple. The sacred building had long been neglected, and was in need of extensive repairs, which Josias proceeded to carry out at great cost. It was while the work was in progress that Helcias, the High Priest, discovered the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy), which had probably been hidden away in some secret recess. The very handwriting of Moses, containing the record of the Covenant, which had once been placed in or beside the Ark, was now happily

recovered, after having been misplaced when the Ark itself had been removed. This venerable monument the High Priest handed to Saphan, the scribe, who carried it to the king. Josias bade the scribe read it aloud in his presence, and was deeply impressed by the dreadful punishments with which it threatened all who should presume to depart from the Law. Filled with fear, the king commanded Helcias to consult the prophetess Holda concerning the evils that awaited them, because their fathers had not hearkened to the words contained in the Book, and had not done all that was written for their benefit. The prophetess answered: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will bring evils upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, because they have forsaken Me, and have sacrificed to strange gods.' But to the king of Juda, who sent you to consult the Lord, thus shall you say: 'Forasmuch as thou hast heard the words of the Book, and thy heart hath been moved to fear, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Therefore thou shalt be gathered to thy sepulchre in peace, that thy eyes may not see all the evils which I will bring upon this place.'"

The renewal of the Covenant.

Upon receiving this reply, the king ordered an assembly of all the ancients of Juda and Jerusalem in the Temple, where, in the hearing of all, he read aloud the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the House of the Lord. This done, he turned to the assembled people, and with them made a solemn covenant always to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, His testimonies, and His ceremonies, with all their heart and with all their soul. Next was celebrated the Feast of the Passover with all the ceremonies enjoined in the Book of the Covenant; and never, since the days of Samuel, had

the Feast been so solemnly observed as in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josias.

Josias slain in battle by the king of Egypt.

Some thirteen years after the events above narrated, Nechao, king of Egypt, declared war against the Assyrians, and, as his object was to reach Charcamis on the Euphrates, he would of necessity have to pass through the territory of Juda. Josias was determined not to allow this; and he accordingly marched out with his army to oppose the passage, although Nechao solemnly averred that he had no hostile intention against Juda. Josias, however, remained obstinate, and the two armies encountered each other at Mageddo, in the territory of Issachar. The tide of battle turned against Josias, who fell severely wounded, and had to be borne off the field. His attendants placed him in a chariot and drove him to Jerusalem; but his wound proved mortal. His death was universally mourned, and his funeral canticle, composed by the prophet Jeremias, long continued to be sung on his anniversary.

Character of Josias.

Josias had spent his life in promoting religion, and ended it gloriously in the defence of his country, God being pleased to withdraw him in this manner from the miseries which were shortly to befall his devoted people. He was a prince of most excellent disposition, whose praise is given to us in the words of the Holy Ghost Himself: "The memory of Josias is like the composition of a sweet smell made by the art of a perfumer. His remembrance shall be sweet as honey in every mouth, and as music at a banquet of wine. He was directed by God unto the repentance of the nation, and he took away the abominations of wickedness; and he directed his heart towards the Lord, and in the days of sinners he strengthened godliness" (Ecclus. xlix. 1-4).

CHAPTER XCIX

THE KINGDOM OF JUDA—JOACHAZ, JOAKIM, JOACHIN, AND SEDECIAS, B.C. 610-588—THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, B.C. 588

JOACHAZ, B.C. 610.—On the death of Josias, the people chose as his successor Joachaz, his second son, thus passing over Eliacim, the rightful heir. The reign of this wicked prince was but of short duration. Three months after his accession he went out against the king of Egypt as he was returning from his Assyrian expedition, but was defeated and taken prisoner at Rebla. Nechao treated his captive with great severity, and sent him into Egypt to die in chains, after he had set his brother Eliacim on the throne of Juda, and imposed a tribute of 100 talents of silver and one of gold.

Joachaz sent in chains into Egypt.

JOAKIM, B.C. 610-599.—Eliacim, better known as Joakim, was five-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and he ruled at Jerusalem eleven years. Instead of walking in the footsteps of his pious father, Josias, he chose rather to imitate the wickedness of many of his ancestors, nor was he deterred by the chastisements which had been inflicted on his brother. His character was marked by avarice and cruelty, and, to crown his wickedness, he abandoned himself to the grossest idolatries. The prophet Urias, who had incurred his displeasure, and had fled for safety into Egypt, was brought back, and by his orders put to a most cruel death.

Joakim abandons himself to idolatry.

In a solemn assembly of the people, the prophecies of Jeremias had been read aloud by his disciple Baruch, and as they were reported to contain threats of the Divine vengeance against Juda and against the king, Joakim ordered

one of the princes to read the volume to him; but so angry did he become on hearing its contents that he cut the scroll in pieces and cast them into the fire. By the advice of the princes, Jeremias and Baruch hid themselves, and only thus escaped the vengeance of the enraged Joakim. In his retirement, however, Jeremias was commanded by God to take another scroll, on which he was to write the self-same words, and to add to them new threats concerning the evils to befall Juda and its wicked king.

Baruch reads the prophecies of Jeremias.

The time had now come when God's punishment was to fall with terrible force on the guilty Joakim, and on the whole kingdom of Juda, whose crimes had long cried to heaven for vengeance. Returning from a campaign against the Egyptians, Nabuchodonosor, with a powerful army, attacked their vassal, Joakim. He laid siege to Jerusalem, took the city, carried off many of the sacred vessels from the Temple, and led with him to Babylon many of the principal youths of Juda, among whom were Daniel and his three friends, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias. The king himself was made prisoner and put in fetters, but was afterwards released and reinstated on the throne as a vassal of the Babylonian sovereign. Joakim only kept his faith with Nabuchodonosor for three years. At the end of that time, relying on assistance from Egypt, he rebelled, and made an ineffectual effort to cast off the odious yoke.

First captivity of Juda, B.C. 606.

Nabuchodonosor, whose attention was at that time occupied in securing the dominions of his deceased father, was unable to proceed against Joakim in person, but sent such forces as he could spare to harass Juda by pillage and plunder.

Joakim tries to cast off the Babylonian yoke.

At length, in the eleventh year of Joakim's reign, the king of Babylon took the field in person, and, according to Josephus, being admitted into Jerusalem, "slew such

as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity, together with their king, whom he commanded to be thrown before the walls without burial." And, in the Lamentations of Jeremias, we read concerning Joakim: "They shall not mourn for him . . . they shall not lament for him. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, rotten and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem."

Death of Joakim.

JOACHIN, B.C. 599.—At the age of eighteen years, Joachin succeeded his father to the crown of Juda; but he had reigned only three months and ten days when he was dethroned by Nabuchodonosor, who carried him off in chains to Babylon. His mother, his wives and children, together with the princes and captains of his army, were made to share his captivity. The strong men, too, and all that were fit for war, and all the skilled artisans, were carried off, there being none left behind but the poorest in the land. The king's palace was plundered, the Temple was again rifled of what treasures it still possessed, and the sacred vessels of the sanctuary were either broken in pieces or conveyed to Babylon to be placed in the temple of Bel.

Second captivity of Juda, B.C. 599.

Joachin was cast into prison, and was kept in close confinement for thirty-six years; but in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity Evilmerodach, the successor of Nabuchodonosor, taking compassion on him, released him from prison, and treated him with marked respect, assigning him in the royal presence a throne above all the other kings who were, like himself, captives in Babylon.

Joachin's release after 36 years' confinement.

SEDECIAS, B.C. 599-588.—Nabuchodonosor now placed on the throne of Juda Matthanias, the third son of Josias, and uncle of Joachin, but changed his name to Sedecias. This, the last king of Juda, reigned eleven years—down to the

The last king over the remnant of Juda.

destruction of Jerusalem. He did evil before the Lord according to all that Joakim had done, and treated with scorn the warnings of Jeremias. Disregarding the oath which he had sworn to be faithful to Nabuchodonosor, he sought the alliance of the king of Egypt, and threw off his allegiance to Babylon.

Wickedness of the people.

Led on by the example of their wicked king, the majority of the people plunged headlong into every kind of abomination: they defiled the House of the Lord which He had sanctified to Himself; they mocked the messengers of God and despised His words; they insulted the prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord was provoked against His people.

Jerusalem is besieged by Nabuchodonosor.

To punish Sedecias, Nabuchodonosor with a powerful army laid siege to Jerusalem, being resolved on its utter destruction. For sixteen months the siege was continued without interruption; but hearing that the forces of Egypt were marching to the relief of the city, the Babylonian king suddenly drew off his army for the purpose of giving battle to the Egyptians. In the meantime Jerusalem had suffered all the miseries of famine owing to the prolonged siege; and to such an extremity were the inhabitants reduced that even the nobles went about fain to obtain scraps the most loathsome, while mothers are said to have boiled and eaten their own children. No sooner, then, did it become known throughout the city that Nabuchodonosor had withdrawn from the siege than the hearts of all were filled with joy to think that now at length their sufferings were ended, and that their patient endurance had been so unexpectedly rewarded. But their exultation was to be but short-lived. Jeremias continued to reproach them for their infidelities, and in such distinct terms announced the destruction of the city that in their

anger they imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan the scribe, where he was detained many days.

Jeremias.

Soon the army of Nabuchodonosor returned, and the siege was resumed with renewed vigour. Sending secretly for Jeremias, Sedecias asked him: "Is there, thinkest thou, any word from the Lord?" The prophet made answer: "There is: thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon. Where are your prophets that prophesied to you and said, 'The king of Babylon shall not come against you and against this land'?" Sedecias gave orders for Jeremias to be led back to prison, but to be treated with respect, and to have his personal wants attended to as long as there remained any food in the city.

Sedecias is taken prisoner.

The siege had lasted two and a half years when a breach was made in the wall, and the city was carried by a vigorous assault. In the confusion which followed, Sedecias, with a handful of men, escaped by the gate of the royal palace, and fled with all speed in the direction of Jericho; but, being hotly pursued by the enemy, he was taken at early dawn and brought before his conqueror. Terrible vengeance was wreaked upon the unhappy prisoner in return for his treachery. After undergoing the awful agony of beholding the slaughter of his own children, he, the last of the kings of Juda, was sentenced to have his eyes put out, and to remain a prisoner in Babylon till his death. Thus was accomplished the prophecy of Jeremias: "Thine eyes shall behold the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee." With reason, too, did he now begin to realise the predictions of Jeremias and Ezechiel, which before he had despised as contradictory; the latter prophet had informed him that he should not *see* Babylon, though the other had said that he should *die* there.

The royal city of David was now doomed to experience the full fury of an enraged enemy. The last act of destruction was entrusted by Nabuchodonosor to his general Nabuzardan, who carried out his master's instructions with a terrible exactness. The city was given up to pillage; everything of value belonging to the inhabitants was stripped from them; the Temple, the king's palace, and the houses of the wealthy, were set on fire, and their walls levelled with the ground. Those who escaped the sword were transported to Babylon, and none were allowed to remain in Juda except the vinedressers, and a few husbandmen to cultivate the land.

Destruction of Jerusalem. Third captivity of Juda, B.C. 588.

Thus did the kingdom of the Jews come to an end, after it had subsisted 468 years from the commencement of David's reign. Regarding only the monarchy of Juda from the time of Solomon's death, we find that it had continued 388 years, or 134 years longer than that of Israel.

What a fall for the once great city of Jerusalem! She had turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of God's messengers, had treated with scorn their attempts to raise her from the evils into which she had sunk, till, perceiving that she continued to despise His calls, the Almighty allowed His wrath to be kindled against His people, "*and there was no remedy.*"

CHAPTER C

CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF JUDA

On his departure for Babylon, Nabuzardan did not leave the land in a state of anarchy, but made Godolias to be governor over those that were left, and appointed as his residence Maspha, a fortress situated a little to the north of Jerusalem. Along

Godolias is left governor.

with the other captives Jeremias also had been cast into chains, but out of respect for his saintly character, Nabuzardan caused his fetters to be struck off, and gave him his choice, either to accompany the captives to Babylon, or to remain behind in his own country. "Behold," he said to him, "I have loosed thee this day from the chains which were upon thy hands: if it please thee to come with me to Babylon, come; and I will set my eyes upon thee: but if it do not please thee to come with me, stay here: behold all the land is before thee, as thou shalt choose: dwell in the midst of the people with Godolias, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Juda; or whithersoever it shall please thee to go, go." The prophet chose the latter alternative, and went about among the scanty remnant of Juda, ministering to their wants, and by his words encouraging them to submit patiently to their sad lot.

Godolias showed marked kindness to the people entrusted to his care; and when it became known that he had been appointed governor of the country, many, both soldiers and people, who had fled from Sedecias and had effected their escape, and many Jews also that were in Moab, and in Edom, and among the Ammonites, came out from their retirement and placed themselves under his protection. He received them with these words of welcome: "Fear not to serve the Chaldeans; dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. Gather ye the vintage, and the harvest, and the oil, and lay it up in your vessels, and abide in your cities which you hold." The people gladly responded to his invitation, and soon were peacefully occupied in gathering the season's fruits.

Many refugees come to Godolias.

For a time all went well; but deep treachery was brewing; for among those who came to Maspha as the

guests of Godolias was Ismael, the son of Nathanias, of the blood royal, who envied the dignity of the governor and resolved on his destruction. He made known his intention to ten confederate princes, and only waited for a suitable opportunity to carry out his dark deed. Godolias was informed of his danger by Johanan, the son of Caree, who said to him in private: "Know that Baalis, the king of Ammon, hath sent Ismael, the son of Nathanias, to kill thee. I will go, and I will kill Ismael, lest he kill thee, and all the Jews be scattered that are gathered unto thee, and the remnant of Juda perish." Godolias, whose open disposition caused him to pay no heed to such a warning, replied: "Do not this thing, for what thou sayest of Ismael is false." The unsuspecting governor took no precautions against the treachery of the conspirators, and soon after this even invited them to sup with him. Towards the close of the feast, Ismael and his chosen companions suddenly set upon Godolias and slew him, together with his attendants. This happened two months after the burning of Jerusalem.

Godolias is slain by Ismael.

Fearful of the consequences of their rash act, the murderers fled into the country of the Ammonites; and all the Jews now remaining in Juda, dreading the vengeance of Nabuchodonosor, resolved to abandon their country, and to take refuge in Egypt. In vain Jeremias tried to allay their fears, promising them, if they would but remain, that no harm should come to them. At the same time he assured them that, should they persist in their determination to go into Egypt, the sword which they dreaded should overtake them there, and that those who escaped the sword should perish by famine and pestilence. When he had finished speaking, the people exclaimed in anger: "Thou tellest a lie; the Lord our God hath not sent thee, saying:

The remnant of Juda flee to Egypt.

'Go not into Egypt to dwell there'; but Baruch setteth thee on against us, to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans to kill us, and to cause us to be carried away captives to Babylon." Thus, heedless of the prophet's warning, men, women, and children, together with Jeremias, and Baruch who had returned from Babylon, were carried into Egypt; and thus was Juda abandoned even by the remnant that had been committed by Nabuchodonosor to the care of Godolias.

CHAPTER CI

THE PROPHET JEREMIAS AND HIS DISCIPLE BARUCH

Ministry of Jeremias.

It is probably owing to the greater extent of their prophetical writings that Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and Daniel, have been styled the four Greater Prophets. Jeremias (*Great before the Lord*), whose history is so closely interwoven with that of the times in which he lived, was the son of Helcias, a priest of Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin. Even before his birth God had sanctified him, and set him apart for the great office he was afterwards to fulfil. His ministry began in the reign of Josias, nor did it end with the Babylonian captivity, but was continued in Egypt, where we have seen him carried off, against his will, along with his faithful disciple, Baruch. Being still very young when the Lord made known to him the great work He had in store for him, he humbly declared: "Lord God: behold, I cannot speak, for I am but a child." But God reassured him and said: "Say not, 'I am a child': for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee; and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak: behold, I have given My words in thy mouth."

The warnings of Jeremias.

Boldly and unceasingly did he continue to warn the people of Juda of the evils they were preparing for themselves by the wickedness of their lives. He announced to them the destruction of Jerusalem, and reproached them for their infidelities so plainly that he was cast into prison. He foretold the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, and, under the type of the good and the bad figs, predicted the restoration of the Jews that had been carried away captive with Joachin, and the desolation of those that were left behind.

Jeremias is cast into a well.

Even in prison he did not cease to admonish and rebuke; and at length the violence of the princes against him became so bitter that they sought his life, and applied to king Sedecias for leave to let him down by ropes into a deep well, in which there was no water, but much mire. Jeremias would soon have been smothered, had not the king, acting on the advice of Abdemelech, one of his officers, given orders for him to be drawn up again.

Jeremias hides the ark.

In the second chapter of the Second Book of Machabees we read how Jeremias hid the Ark at the time of the captivity. Acting under God's command, he gave orders that the Tabernacle and the Ark should be taken with him to the mountain of Nebo, which, long before, Moses had ascended when he saw the inheritance of God. Arrived at the mountain, he found a hollow cave, into which he carried the Tabernacle, the Ark, and the Altar of Incense, and then closed the entrance to the cave. Soon there arrived near the spot some of those who had followed the prophet; but when they came up to mark the place they could not find it. Jeremias rebuked them, and said: "The place shall be unknown, till God gather together the congregation of the people, and receive them to mercy" (2 Mac. ii. 7).

The miraculous fire.

Moreover, in the first chapter of the same Book we are told that, at the time of the captivity, some of the priests secretly took the sacred fire from the altar, and carrying it to a certain valley, hid it in a deep well in which there was no water. When many years had passed, Nehemias, along with some other priests, was sent to seek the fire; but when they came to the well they found no fire in it, but thick water. This they drew up; and when all was ready for the sacrifice, Nehemias commanded the victims and the wood on which they were laid to be sprinkled with the water. For some time the sun had been hidden by a cloud; but when he shone out and cast his rays on the holocaust, it was immediately set on fire, so that all were amazed. Hymns were sung till the sacrifice was consumed, and then Nehemias commanded the water that was left to be poured out upon the great stones. No sooner was this done than a flame arose, but it was consumed by the light which shone from the altar.

Jeremias a figure of Christ.

Throughout his whole life Jeremias was a special figure of Jesus Christ, in the persecutions he underwent for discharging his duty, in his charity for his persecutors, and in the violent death which he suffered at their hands; for there is an ancient tradition that he was stoned to death at Taphnes by the remnant of the Jews who had retired into Egypt. By the special command of God he never married; so that, besides enjoying the privilege of being sanctified before his birth, he was a priest, prophet, virgin, and martyr.

Baruch.

The faithful attendant and secretary of Jeremias was Baruch, a man distinguished for his noble birth and for his skill in the law. So intimately did he share in the labours of his master that the ancient Fathers have considered the prophecy which bears his name, and which he wrote from Babylon, as a part of

the prophecy of his master, and have usually quoted it under the name of Jeremias; for which reason Baruch is not ranked either in the class of the four Greater or in that of the twelve Minor Prophets.

CHAPTER CII

THE PROPHET EZECHIEL

ALTHOUGH far removed from the land of their birth, the Jews were not entirely bereft of consolation; but even amid a strange people prophets arose who instructed and comforted them, and filled them with hope by the promise that they should one day be restored to the land of their forefathers.

Ezechiel prophesies in Babylon.

Among the captives that were carried away to Babylon with king Joachin was Ezechiel, whose name signifies *strength of God*, a man of the priestly race, and a contemporary of Jeremias. As Jeremias prophesied in Jerusalem, so did Ezechiel prophesy to the same effect in Babylon, and is even said to have ended his days in like manner by martyrdom.

The Cedar of Christ and His Church.

His prophecies are of the most varied description. In his parable of the cedar-twig, we have a promise of Christ and His Church, the *Cedar* being the royal stock of David, and the *Twig* Jesus Christ, whom God has planted in Mount Sion, the high mountain of His Church, to which all nations flow: "I myself will take of the marrow of the high cedar," saith the Lord God, "and will set it: I will crop off a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent. On the high mountains of Israel will I plant it, and it shall shoot forth into branches, and shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar; and all birds shall

dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof" (Ezech. xvii. 22, 23).

The destruction of Jerusalem and Babylon foretold.

He describes the destruction of Jerusalem, foretells also the ruin of the Ammonites, and how Babylon, the destroyer of others, shall itself finally be destroyed. Evil pastors he reproves, and promises that Christ, the true Pastor, shall come and gather together His flock from all parts of the earth, and preserve it for ever: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? Behold, I Myself will come upon the shepherds: I will require My flock at their hands, and I will cause them to cease from feeding the flock any more. AND I WILL SET UP ONE SHEPHERD OVER THEM, and He shall feed them" (Ezech. xxxiv.).

The vision of the Dry Bones.

In a vision, too, he sees the rebuilding of the Temple, and the glory of the God of Israel once again re-entering by the way of the eastern gate; while, in the vision of the Dry Bones, he not only foreshadows the deliverance of the people from their captivity, but the great mystery of the resurrection as well. Ezechiel was brought by the Spirit of the Lord, and set down in the midst of a plain that was full of dry bones. And God said to him: "Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live?" On Ezechiel's replying that God alone knew this, he was commanded to speak to the dry bones, and say to them: "Hear the word of God: Behold I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow over you, and will cover you with skin: I will send spirit into you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." As the prophet spoke, a noise was heard and great commotion as the bones came together, each one to its respective joint; sinews and flesh covered them, and the skin was stretched over them, but as yet there was no life in them. God then said to Ezechiel: "Prophesy

and say: 'Come, spirit, from the four winds, and blow upon these slain, and let them live again.'" No sooner had the prophet pronounced the words commanded him than those who had been dead stood upon their feet, a mighty army.

The interpretation of the vision was also given to Ezechiel. The bones represented the Jewish people exclaiming in their grief: "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off." Notwithstanding these desponding thoughts, God promises to restore His people, and through the mouth of the prophet addresses to them these consoling words: "Behold, I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O My people, and will bring you into the land of Israel. I will make you rest upon your own land." He also promised to make a covenant of peace with them, and to set His sanctuary in their midst; that His Tabernacle should be with them, and that He would be their God, and they should be His people. How consoling in their distress must have been these words of Divine compassion! how full of hope this promise of pardon and of restoration to the land of their fathers, if they would but seek their God in all sincerity!

The interpretation of the vision.

CHAPTER CIII

THE PROPHET DANIEL—HISTORY OF SUSANNA

The national existence of the Ten Tribes was lost completely, and we hear no more of them; but the remnant of Juda and Benjamin remained among their conquerors a separate people, maintained their own religion, and, as far as possible, their own peculiar customs and political institutions.

The captive Hebrews.

Among those who were led captive into Babylon in B.C. 606, during the reign of king Joakim, were, as we have already seen, Daniel and his three friends, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias. Daniel was of the royal blood of the kings of Juda, and became so renowned for his wisdom and knowledge that it became a proverb among the Babylonians, *as wise as Daniel.* The four youths were chosen by Nabuchodonosor to be trained for three years in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, and for this purpose were handed over to the care of Malasar, one of the officers of the Court, who was himself responsible for their well-being to the chief officer Asphenez. Malasar was ordered to show them every kindness, and to give them meat and wine from the king's own table, so that they might afterwards appear comely and well favoured, and fit to appear before the king. At the Court of Nabuchodonosor, Daniel and his three companions were known as Baltassar, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago respectively.

Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias.

Resolved not to defile himself either by eating meat forbidden by the law, or that had previously been offered to idols, Daniel came to Asphenez, and desired that he and his companions might be allowed to abstain from wine, and to take only pulse for their food. Asphenez was willing to comply with the request, but fearing for the result, he said to Daniel: "If the king should see your faces leaner than those of other youths, your equals, you will endanger my life with the king." Upon this, Daniel made a further application to Malasar, beseeching him that he would, by way of trial, give them this simple fare for ten days, and then compare their condition with that of the other youths who received their food from the king's table. This Malasar consented to do; and finding at the end of the ten days that the four friends looked fairer and more

Daniel and his companions abstain from meat and wine.

healthy than ever they had done before, he allowed the diet to be continued. To comeliness of person God also added great knowledge and wisdom, and gave to Daniel in particular the spirit of prophecy and interpretation of visions and dreams, as before he had done to Joseph in Egypt.

Susanna.

Daniel was only about twelve years old when he first displayed his sagacity by disclosing the malice of Susanna's wicked accusers. Susanna, the daughter of Helcias, was married to a rich Jew named Joakim, and was noted alike for her beauty and virtue. Joakim's house was the resort of many of the Jews, and there the people were accustomed to assemble to have their disputes legally settled by two of the elders, who were permitted by the Babylonian Government to be appointed judges every year.

The two wicked elders.

When the business of the day was over, and the people had departed at noon, Susanna was in the habit of walking in the cool shade of her husband's orchard. The two elders, struck with her surpassing beauty, allowed their evil passions to get the better of them, and each, without knowing the dark purpose of the other, determined to seek an opportunity of carrying into effect the wickedness on which his heart was set: "they perverted their own minds and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments." Both had watched for a suitable occasion when they might find her alone; and one day it so chanced that after they had taken their departure at the usual hour, and had set out different ways, each turned back and walked in the direction of Joakim's orchard. Chancing to meet face to face at the gate, they became confused, but acknowledging their intentions to each other, they formed a plan by which they might entrap the unsuspecting Susanna. They

entered stealthily, and, concealing themselves, waited till she should come for her usual mid-day walk. Soon they heard footsteps, and from their hiding-place saw her, accompanied by two maids, making towards the stream which ran through the orchard. Arrived there, Susanna sent her maids back to the house to fetch oil and washing balls, that she might refresh herself in the cooling waters, bidding them carefully fasten the door of the orchard for fear of being disturbed.

Susanna's dilemma.

Scarcely had the door closed on her attendants when the two wicked elders suddenly rose up, and hastened to pour their foul suggestions into the chaste ears of Susanna; at the same time they threatened that, if she refused to consent to their proposals, they would accuse her of adultery, a crime punishable with death, and swear that they themselves had surprised her in the act. Amazed and terrified at first, Susanna soon regained her self-possession, and said: "I am straitened on every side; for if I do this thing it is death to me, and if I do it not I shall not escape from your hands; but it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord." Upon that, she called aloud for help, and the elders also cried out against her. Soon the servants hurried to the assistance of their mistress; but when they heard what things the elders alleged against her, they hung their heads for shame, "for never had there been any such word said of Susanna." Next day the charge was brought against her, and she was put on her trial before the people.

Susanna is condemned to death.

Surrounded by her sorrowing kinsfolk and friends, Susanna stood, grief-stricken, yet beautiful to behold. As the two elders were her accusers and witnesses, her only hope of help was from above, for she knew that no human power could save

her. A most plausible story was invented against her, and on this evidence she was condemned to death. The multitude could but approve of the sentence pronounced by her unjust and wicked judges, who pretended that they were acting agreeably to the law. Hardly were the words of her doom spoken, when Susanna with a loud voice cried out: "O Eternal God, who knowest hidden things, who knowest all things before they come to pass, Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me: and behold I must die, whereas I have done none of the things which these men have maliciously forged against me." She was then led out to be stoned to death.

The two elders convicted of bearing false witness.

As she was being conducted, followed by the whole multitude, to the place where the dread sentence was to be carried out, suddenly a voice was heard exclaiming: "I am innocent of the blood of this woman. Are ye so foolish, ye children of Israel, that, without examination or knowledge of the truth, you have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return to judgment, for they have borne false witness against her." It was the voice of Daniel, who had been inspired to speak thus. On hearing his words all the people turned towards him, and went back in haste to the place of judgment. Daniel said to the people: "Separate these two far from one another, and I will examine them." When the two had been taken apart, he asked each of them separately under what kind of tree he had seen the crime committed. One of them said under a mastic-tree, whereas the other affirmed it was under a holm-tree, thus contradicting each other. Then did the whole assembly cry out with a loud voice, and bless God for thus wonderfully saving the innocent Susanna, who had put her trust in Him. The two elders, now convicted out of their own mouths of bearing false witness, were instantly led away and put to the same

death to which they themselves had doomed their helpless victim.

Rejoicing of Susanna's friends.

But Helcias and his wife praised God for their daughter, while Joakim, her husband, and all her kinsfolk rejoiced and gave thanks, because no evil was found in her.

From this time Susanna, whose name signifies *a lily*, was regarded as a pattern of conjugal chastity. As for Daniel, by reason of this his first prophetical act, his fame was noised abroad, and he became great before all the people.

CHAPTER CIV

NABUCHODONOSOR'S DREAM—THE GREAT GOLDEN IMAGE

The wisdom of Daniel and his companions.

Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias, at the end of their three years' training, were so advanced in knowledge and understanding that the king found them to surpass even the wisest in all his kingdom, and advanced them to positions of the highest importance and dignity.

The king's dream.

The next event which brought great distinction to Daniel was his interpretation of the king's dream. Nabuchodonosor had had a dream which had caused him great uneasiness of mind; yet, on awaking, he could not recall what the dream was about. He accordingly called before him the wise men, the magicians, and the Chaldean astrologers, who pretended to divine by means of the stars; but when he made known to them that they were required to tell him, not only his dream, but also the meaning thereof, they were astonished at a demand which appeared so unreasonable and so impossible of accomplishment: they

therefore said to him: "There is no man upon earth that can accomplish thy word, O king; for the thing which thou askest is difficult, nor can anyone be found that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose conversation is not with men." Nabuchodonosor, in an outburst of fury, gave orders that they should be put to death, and at the same time issued a decree that all the wise men of his kingdom should suffer the same fate.

ıe interpretaon of the eam by aniel.

As this cruel order affected the lives of Daniel and his companions, Daniel at once hastened to Arioch, the general of the king's army, who was charged with the execution of the sentence, to inquire concerning the cause of the king's anger. Having obtained a delay during which to consider the question, he earnestly besought God to reveal the mystery to him, that he and his companions might not die. His prayer was heard; for that same night, in a vision, God made known to him both the dream and what it meant. Rising early, he went to Arioch, and entreated him not to destroy the wise men of Babylon, but to take him before the king, when he would unfold to him the meaning of his dream. Being brought by Arioch into the royal presence, Daniel, at the king's request that he would tell him the dream and its interpretation, spoke thus: "The secret that the king desireth to know none of the wise men can declare; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth mysteries, who hath shown to thee what is to come to pass in the latter times. Thy dream and the visions of thy head are these: 'Thou, O king, sawest as it were a great statue, and the look thereof was terrible. The head of this statue was of fine gold, the breast and arms were of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay. Then thou sawest a stone, cut without hands out of a mountain, which struck the statue upon the feet and broke it into pieces: the pieces

were scattered by the wind, but the stone which struck the statue became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.' Now, this is the interpretation of thy dream: 'The head of gold is thyself; after thee shall rise up another kingdom, inferior to thine, of silver; this shall be followed by one of brass, which shall rule over all the world: and then shall come a fourth, of iron, which shall subdue all things; but as the feet were part of iron and part of clay, therefore shall this kingdom be partly strong and partly broken. Yet a fifth kingdom shall arise, set up by God Himself, a kingdom that shall break into pieces and consume all the other kingdoms, but itself shall stand for ever.'"

Struck with wonder at the wisdom of Daniel, the king bowed his head, and said: "Verily, your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of hidden things." Forthwith Daniel was loaded with favours; and among the honours heaped upon him were those of being appointed governor over all the provinces of Babylon, and chief of the magistrates over all the wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago were placed over the works of the provinces of Babylon, but Daniel himself remained in the king's palace.

The empires foreshadowed in the king's dream.

The different empires denoted by the metals are generally supposed to have been: (1) *The Chaldean*, Nabuchodonosor being at that time the most powerful monarch on earth. He conquered many nations, and greatly embellished Babylon, surrounding it with three walls, and building hanging gardens which were the wonder of the world. (2) That of the *Medes and Persians*, later, and of less duration and extent. (3) *The Macedonian Empire* of Alexander the Great, who received ambassadors at Babylon from the most distant nations, testifying their submission. (4) *The Roman Empire* harassed by its civil wars, this empire swal-

lowing up, as it did, all that Alexander had left to his generals.

All these at length gave way to the kingdom raised up by God Himself, the kingdom of Christ in the Catholic Church, which cannot be destroyed, and which shall endure for ever.

Nabuchodonosor's great golden statue.

Forgetful alike of the deep impression made upon him by the interpretation of his dream, and of his words uttered in praise of the God of the Jews, Nabuchodonosor soon after this caused a great statue to be made—probably in honour of Bel—and to be set up in the plain of Dura. The height of this image was 60 cubits, and its breadth 6 cubits, and it was plated with gold. To celebrate the dedication of it, messengers were sent into the farthest provinces of the kingdom, bidding the nobles and captains, the magistrates and judges, the rulers and governors, and all the chief men, to repair to the spot and to fall down and adore the image which king Nabuchodonosor had set up. When all were assembled, the voice of a herald was heard commanding that, at the sound of music, every man should prostrate himself before the statue, under pain of being cast into a fiery furnace.

The fiery furnace.

Ananias, Misael, and Azarias were also included in this summons; and as they failed to appear, they were at once reported to the king by the Babylonian nobles, who were jealous of the honours and favours showered upon them. Daniel, however, on account of his exalted position, they did not venture to attack in this way. Filled with anger, the king sent for the three youths, and said to them: "Is it true, O Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, that you do not worship my gods, nor adore the golden statue that I have set up? If you do not adore, you shall be cast that same hour into the furnace of burning fire; and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" Nothing daunted by his

threats, the three youths modestly, yet resolutely, answered: "Behold, O king, our God whom we worship is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire and to deliver us out of thy hands: but if He will not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not worship thy gods, nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up." Thus did they testify their faith in God's power, and their determination to suffer death rather than go against their conscience. Filled with fury, Nabuchodonosor gave orders for the furnace to be heated seven times more than usual, and for the youths to be bound and cast, clad as they were, into the midst of the flames. So fierce was the fire that the men who cast them in were seized by it and burnt to death, but the three pious youths rose up unhurt, praising and blessing God.

God's servants unhurt by the flames.

Meanwhile the king's servants ceased not to feed the fire with pitch and dry wood, so that the flames mounted up above the furnace nine-and-forty cubits, and consumed such of the Chaldeans as had ventured to approach too near. In answer to the prayer of the youths calling on God to protect them and to make His name glorious, an angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to Azarias and his companions, "and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew, and the fire touched them not at all, nor troubled them, nor did them any harm." Their bonds being loosed, the three walked unscathed in the midst of the furnace, glorifying God in a beautiful canticle of praise, in which they called upon all the works of creation to unite with them in giving praise to the Most High God.

Nabuchodonosor orders their release.

The king himself, thinking to see the destruction of the three young Jews, came to look into the furnace, when, struck with astonishment, he exclaimed: "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Behold, I see four men

loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no hurt in them, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then approaching nearer, he called aloud: "Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth." His command was immediately obeyed, and all were astonished to find that the fire had had no power over their bodies, and that not a hair of their heads had been singed, nor their garments injured.

Then in words of praise Nabuchodonosor blessed the God of Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, who had sent His angel and delivered His servants that had believed in Him. He also issued the following decree: "Every people, tribe, and tongue, which shall speak blasphemy against the God of Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, shall be destroyed and their houses laid waste; for there is no other God that can save in this manner." The three youths were not only re-established in their former dignities, but fresh honours and distinctions were conferred upon them.

he king's cree.

CHAPTER CV

NABUCHODONOSOR'S HUMILIATION—DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

Again Nabuchodonosor had a dream which troubled and alarmed him exceedingly, and again he called to his side the wise men and soothsayers, but they could not declare to him its meaning. Then sending for Daniel, he sought of him the interpretation of his dream, which he related as follows: "I saw a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was exceeding great, reaching unto heaven: its branches extended even to the ends of the earth, its leaves were most beautiful, and its fruit exceeding much: under it

ond dream o Nabu- c donosor.

dwelt cattle and beasts, and in the branches thereof the fowls of the air had their abode, and all flesh did eat of it. And behold a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven, crying out: 'Cut down the tree, and chop off the branches thereof: shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruits: let the beasts fly away that are under it, and the birds from its branches: but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, and let it be fastened with a band of iron and of brass among the grass, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let its portion be with the wild beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given him, and let seven times pass over him.'"

Its interpretation by Daniel.

After the king had finished the recital of his dream, he requested Daniel to explain to him its meaning; but for a full hour Daniel remained in silent thought, being troubled in spirit at beholding the calamities that were to befall Nabuchodonosor. Marking the prophet's anxiety and his unwillingness to speak, Nabuchodonosor urged him to fear not, but to unfold to him the real meaning of the dream. At length Daniel answered: "The tree which thou sawest, which was high and strong, is thyself, O king, who art grown great and become mighty; for thy greatness hath grown, and hath reached to heaven, and thy power unto the ends of the earth. The words of the Holy One, whom thou didst see descending from above, express the sentence of the Most High, which is to come upon my lord the king. Thou shalt be cast out from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with cattle and with wild beasts, and thou shalt eat grass, as an ox, and shalt be wet with the dew of heaven; and seven times (*years*) shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. But whereas He commanded that the stump of the tree

should be left, thy kingdom shall remain to thee, after thou shalt have known that power is from Heaven. Wherefore, O king, redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor: perhaps He will forgive thy offences."

unishment Nabu- odonosor.

The king seems soon to have forgotten the counsel of Daniel, for only twelve months afterwards, as he was walking in his palace, and vainly admiring the city which he had enlarged and beautified, he thus communed with himself: "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of the kingdom, by the strength of my power, and in the glory of my excellence?" But a voice from heaven was heard repeating the selfsame threat which Daniel had uttered a year before, and instantly Nabuchodonosor was struck by the hand of God, so that a strange madness seized him; and fleeing the society of men, he sought the company of the beasts of the field. The heart of a beast was given him, and he ate grass like an ox: his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle, and his nails like birds' claws.

ath of Nabu- odonosor, . 562.

When the seven years were ended, his reason was restored to him, and lifting up his eyes to heaven he blessed the Most High, and praised Him that liveth for ever. Being sought for by his nobles, he was restored to his kingdom, and even greater majesty was added to him. Convinced at length that all power is from God, in comparison with whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing, he exclaimed: "Therefore I, Nabuchodonosor, do now praise, and magnify, and glorify the King of heaven, because all His works are true, and His ways judgments; and them that walk in pride He is able to abase." By some it is inferred that he became a true convert, and dying not long after, was probably saved. After his death, which

took place in the forty-third year of his reign, he was succeeded by his son Evilmerodach.

Evilmerodach's kindness to the Jews.

The new king not only treated Daniel with marked respect, but to the Jewish captives in general he showed especial kindness, and even released from his long confinement their unhappy king, Joakim, whom he honoured above all the other royal captives.

Bel, the god of the Babylonians.

The chief god worshipped by the Babylonians was Bel, and to this idol they were in the habit of offering daily twelve measures of fine flour, forty sheep, and sixty vessels of wine. The king also went every day to the temple to adore Bel; but seeing that Daniel worshipped his own God and neglected the gods of the Babylonians, he inquired why he, too, did not worship Bel. Daniel answered: "I do not worship idols made with hands, but the living God that created heaven and earth, and hath power over all flesh." "Doth not Bel," said the king, "seem to thee to be a living God? Seest thou not how much he eateth and drinketh every day?" Smiling, Daniel replied: "O king, be not deceived; for this is but clay within and brass without, neither hath he eaten at any time." Then the king in anger summoned his priests, and threatened to put them to death if they did not declare to him what became of the daily offerings; but at the same time he promised them that Daniel himself should die for having blasphemed, if they could show that it was really Bel who disposed of all these things. Daniel was in no way disturbed by what was said, but merely added: "Be it done according to thy word, O king."

The priests of Bel.

In all there were seventy priests of Bel, and these, together with the king and Daniel, proceeded to the temple. When the meats and the wine had been set before Bel as usual, the priests said to the king: "Do thou, O king, shut the door fast

and seal it with thy own ring; and when thou comest in the morning, if thou findest not that Bel hath eaten up all, we will suffer death; otherwise let Daniel die that hath lied against us." Now, the priests had made a secret passage, and an entrance under the table, and by night they used to come into the temple attended by their wives and children, when they would consume or carry off all the offerings. All being ready, the priests retired; but before the king withdrew, Daniel caused the floor to be sprinkled over with fine ashes, after which the door was closed, and sealed with the king's own ring.

Destruction of Bel and his emple.

Early next morning the king, accompanied by Daniel, proceeded to the temple; and opening the door himself, and finding all the offerings gone, he exclaimed: "Great art thou, O Bel, and there is no deceit in thee." Daniel laughed, and motioning the king to remain where he was, pointed to the floor, saying: "Behold the pavement; mark whose footsteps these are." Observing the footprints of men, women, and children in the ashes that Daniel had strewed, the king, enraged at being thus duped, gave orders for the deceitful priests to be instantly put to death, and for Bel to be delivered into the power of Daniel, who destroyed both it and the temple.

aniel destroys e dragon.

Having discovered a huge dragon, the Babylonians took it for a god, and offered sacrifice to it, as before they had done to Bel. Thinking to persuade Daniel to join in their worship, the king said to him: "Behold, thou canst not say now that this is not a living god: adore him, therefore." Daniel answered: "I adore the Lord my God, for He is the living God; but that is no living god. Give me leave, O king, and I will kill this dragon without sword or club." Being granted permission, Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, which he rolled together in the shape of balls. These he administered

to the dragon, which eagerly swallowed them, and instantly burst asunder. Thereupon Daniel exclaimed: "Behold him whom you worshipped."

The people bent on Daniel's death.

Incensed against Daniel for having destroyed their gods, and against the king for having put the priests of Bel to death, the Babylonians soon began to clamour for the life of Daniel. Gathering together, they proceeded to the royal palace, openly accused the king of being a Jew himself, and threatened that, if he did not deliver Daniel up to them, they would destroy both him and his house.

Daniel is given up to them.

The situation at length became so alarming that the king, to save himself, was reluctantly compelled to surrender Daniel to the enraged multitude, who no sooner got him into their power than they determined to cast him into a den in which were seven fierce lions. To make the animals more ravenous, they were kept for a time from all food, so that the Babylonians never doubted but that they would instantly pounce upon and devour the holy prophet.

Daniel in the lions' den.

God, however, had decreed otherwise, for as soon as Daniel was cast into the den, the lions came around him, and losing all their fierceness, made no attempt to injure him. Hoping that by stress of hunger the lions would yet be driven to destroy their enemy, the Babylonians, for fully six days, threw nothing to them. In the meantime, however, Daniel's wants were provided for in a most wondrous manner. There lived at this time in Judaea a prophet named Habacuc. Now, one day, when he had boiled some pottage, and had broken bread to carry into the field to the reapers, an angel appeared to him, and bade him carry the dinner which he had prepared to Daniel, who was in the lions' den in Babylon. Filled with wonder, Habacuc said to the angel: "Lord, I never saw Babylon, nor do I

know the den." Thereupon the angel, stretching out his hand and taking him by the hair of the head, bore him through the air, and set him down near the entrance to the den. Here Habacuc called to Daniel: "Thou servant of God, take the dinner that God hath sent thee." With a grateful heart Daniel praised God for having remembered him in his sufferings, and then partook of the food offered him. Immediately after Habacuc had delivered the pottage to Daniel, the angel again took him up, and carried him back to the place whence he had brought him.

Daniel's persecutors are cast to the lions.

Six days had gone by since Daniel had been cast to the lions, and on the seventh day the king came to the den to bewail his death; but great was his joy on seeing him alive and unhurt, sitting in the midst of the lions. With feelings of the deepest emotion, he cried out: "Great art Thou, O Lord, the God of Daniel!" and at once gave orders for the saintly prophet to be removed. Then, casting aside all the fear that the threats of an angry crowd had first inspired, he caused those who had sought Daniel's life to be straightway seized and thrown into the den. The lions, no longer tame and docile, but all the more fierce from long starvation, sprang upon the unhappy wretches and tore them to pieces. Moved by the wonders which God had wrought on behalf of His holy servant, the king said: "Let all the inhabitants of the whole earth fear the God of Daniel; for He is the Saviour, working signs and wonders in the earth, who hath delivered Daniel out of the lions' den."

altassar.

The reign of Evilmerodach was but of short duration, for, after he had occupied the throne only two years, a conspiracy was set on foot against him, and he was assassinated. One of the conspirators, Neriglissor, now usurped the throne, and after a short reign of three years was succeeded by his son. The

latter had reigned only nine months when Nabonidus, a descendant of Nabuchodonosor, came to the throne as the last independent king of Babylon. Towards the end of his reign, Nabonidus associated with him in the kingdom his eldest son Baltassar, under whom Babylon fell before the Medes and Persians led by Cyrus, B.C. 538.

CHAPTER CVI

BALTASSAR'S FEAST, B.C. 538—DANIEL IS AGAIN CAST TO THE LIONS

Babylon besieged by the Medes and Persians.

IT was at this time that the Medes and Persians, extending their conquests, penetrated into Babylonia, and marching quickly on the capital, compelled the inhabitants to seek the shelter of their walls. As Nabonidus was away in another part of the kingdom guarding an important fortress, the defence of the city itself was left to the care of Baltassar.

Baltassar's profane banquet.

To show how little concerned he was, and how implicitly he trusted in the mighty walls of Babylon, Baltassar chose the occasion for giving a great feast to his nobles, to which he also invited his wives and concubines and the leading men of the State. As the feast advanced, and the wine began to mount to his brain, Baltassar gave orders for the sacred vessels, which had been taken by Nabuchodonosor from the Temple at Jerusalem, to be brought in, that he and his guests might drink from them in honour of his gods, whose images of gold and silver adorned the banqueting-hall.

For a time all went merrily; but suddenly the mirth and revel ceased, when what seemed to be the hand of a man appeared writing on the wall immediately facing

the king. In an instant Baltassar became pale, his joints seemed loosened, and his knees knocked together by reason of the awful terror with which he was seized. Summoning in all haste his wise men, he sought to know the meaning of the words traced by the mysterious hand, and promised that whosoever should read the writing, and make known to him the interpretation thereof, should have the greatest honours conferred upon him, and be ranked as the third man in his kingdom. His promises were of no avail, for not one of his soothsayers could either decipher the writing or interpret its meaning. The king was much troubled in mind, and the nobles, too, were filled with anxious doubt and dreadful forebodings.

A mysterious hand is seen writing on the wall.

At length the queen-mother, suddenly remembering Daniel, drew near to Baltassar and said: "O king, live for ever, let not thy thoughts trouble thee, neither let thy countenance be changed. There is a man in thy kingdom, by name Daniel, in whom have been found knowledge, and understanding, and interpretation of dreams; let him be called, and he will unfold to thee this mystery." Daniel was accordingly sent for, and having been at once introduced into the royal presence, Baltassar thus addressed him: "I have heard of thee that thou canst interpret obscure things, and resolve things difficult: now, if thou art able to read the writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third prince in my kingdom."

Daniel is summoned.

To this Daniel made answer: "Thy rewards be to thyself, and the gifts of thy house give to another; but the writing I will read to thee, O king, and show thee the interpretation thereof. Thou hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of Heaven, the vessels of His house have been brought before thee,

Daniel interprets the mysterious words.

and thou, and thy nobles, and thy wives have drunk wine in them: thou hast praised the gods of silver, and of gold, and of brass, that neither see, nor hear, nor feel, but the God who hath thy breath in His hand thou hast not glorified: wherefore He hath set down this writing against thee—*Mane*, *Thecel*, *Phares*. Now, the meaning is this: *Mane*, God hath numbered thy kingdom and hath finished it; *Thecel*, thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting; *Phares*, thy kingdom is divided and is given to the Medes and Persians." Baltassar listened with deepest attention, and although Daniel had foretold God's judgments against him, yet did he honour him as he had promised, and assigned him a rank higher than that of his greatest nobles.

Cyrus enters Babylon—Baltassar slain.

Little did Baltassar dream that the doom he had heard was to be so soon fulfilled; but that same night Cyrus, having diverted the waters of the Euphrates, entered the city by the river-bed, and put to the sword the stupefied guards and all who dared to oppose him. In the confusion which followed, Baltassar himself was slain. Nabonidus is said to have continued the struggle against Cyrus; but at length, finding his cause hopeless, he surrendered, and was permitted to spend the rest of his days on an estate assigned to him by his conqueror.

Darius the Mede.

Cyrus, having now made himself master of Babylon, appointed as his viceroy Darius the Mede. Darius showed marked kindness to Daniel, and even appointed him one of the three princes who were set over the 120 district governors that had been chosen to administer the affairs of the conquered provinces. So far did Daniel excel the others in wisdom that it was the intention of Darius to place him over all his kingdom; but when this became generally known, the nobles, stirred by feelings of envy, treacherously resolved to ruin the

favourite minister. Marking his devoted attachment to the religion of his people, and thinking to use this as a means of entrapping him, they cunningly prevailed upon Darius to issue a decree that whosoever should ask any petition of any god or man, except of Darius himself, for a period of thirty days, should be cast to the lions. Gratified by their proposal, the unsuspecting Darius had signed the decree before he had time to grasp the drift of their flattering petition.

Daniel is again cast to the lions.

As his enemies had rightly conjectured, Daniel paid no heed to the edict, but thrice in the day, according to his custom, retired to his room, where, opening the window which looked towards Jerusalem, he poured out his petitions to the God of his fathers. His actions were carefully noted by his enemies, who hastened to Darius, and loudly cried out to have Daniel put to death for having set the royal ordinance at defiance. Seeing now through their malice, the king ceased not till sunset that day to try to devise by what means he might rescue the accused out of their power. Observing his determination, they exclaimed: "Know thou, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree which the king hath made may be altered." There was nothing left for Darius but to comply with their demand to have Daniel cast into the lions' den. To assure himself that none of his enemies might injure Daniel, Darius affixed his own seal to the stone which guarded the entrance to the den, whilst the nobles, too, attached their seals, that Darius might not liberate him unknown to them.

That night Darius's mind was troubled, so that he could not eat nor sleep for thinking of Daniel. Going early next morning to the mouth of the den, he called out mournfully: "Daniel, servant of the living God, hath thy God, whom thou servest always, been able, thinkest

thou, to deliver thee from the lions?" In answer, there echoed from the recesses of the den the voice of Daniel: "O king, live for ever: my God hath sent His angel, and hath shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me." The heart of Darius leapt for joy on hearing these words, and as soon as possible Daniel was removed, and his chief accusers, together with their families, were condemned to suffer the same punishment which they in their malice would have inflicted on the innocent. Before they reached the bottom of the den, they were seized by the savage lions and torn in pieces.

He is taken from the den uninjured.

Darius now issued a new edict which ran thus: "Peace be multiplied unto you. It is decreed by me that in all my empire all men dread and fear the God of Daniel; for He is the living and eternal God for ever. He is the Deliverer and Saviour, doing signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel out of the lions' den."

Darius's new edict.

Daniel is supposed to have died at Court at the advanced age of 110. He wrote many things concerning the Messias, even naming the precise time when He should come upon the earth and suffer death. In the ninth chapter of the Prophecy of Daniel we read these remarkable words: "As I was yet speaking in prayer, behold the man,* Gabriel . . . touched me at the time of the evening sacrifice . . . and said: 'O Daniel, I am come forth to teach thee; . . . therefore, do thou mark the word, and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are shortened [*i.e.*, fixed] upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought; and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the Saint of saints may be

Prophecy of the 70 weeks of years.

* The angel Gabriel.

anointed. Know thou, therefore, and take notice, that from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ, the Prince, there shall be *seven weeks*, and *sixty-two weeks:* . . . and after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain, and the people that deny Him shall not be His. And a people, with their leader, that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste, and after the end of the war the appointed desolation. And he shall confirm the covenant with many in one week; and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail; and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation, and to the end.'"

By a week is here meant a week of years, or *seven years*, and thus by half a week we must understand half of seven years, or *three and a half years*.

Meaning of a week of years.

Now, from the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes, when by his command Nehemias rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, to the baptism of Christ, when He first began to preach, and to execute the office of Messias, there were just 483 years—that is, 7 weeks and 62 weeks of years, or 69 times 7 years. Christ preached for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years (*i.e.*, *half of the week of years*), and then, by His sacrifice upon the cross, abolished all the sacrifices of the Law.

PART VII

FROM THE END OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY, B.C. 536, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS

This Book takes its name from the writer, who was a holy priest and doctor of the law, and comprises the transactions of eighty-two years. Esdras, or Ezra, is thought to have come back to Jerusalem first with Zorobabel, and again at the head of the second body of captives who returned in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. He appeared with great dignity at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, and spent the latter part of his life in exhorting the people and explaining to them the law of God.

CHAPTER CVII

RETURN OF THE JEWS, B.C. 536

The edict of Cyrus.

THE seventy years of captivity foretold by Jeremias, from the capitulation of Jerusalem under king Joakim, B.C. 606, had come and gone, when Cyrus, king of the Persians, who on the death of Darius reigned as sole monarch at Babylon, issued an edict permitting all the Jews to return to their own country, and to rebuild the Temple. He also gave orders that the sacred vessels which Nabuchodonosor had carried off should be restored, and that every assistance should be rendered to the captives by those among whom they dwelt.

The response to this proclamation was by no means general, and only 42,360, along with their servants, availed themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them of settling once again in their native land. These set out

under the leadership of Zorobabel, son of Salathiel, and grandson of king Joachin, and accompanied by Josue, the High Priest, they arrived at Jerusalem, where they immediately erected an altar on which to offer the daily sacrifice till the Temple should be finished.

Zorobabel returns with the first body of captives.

The return of the captives had occupied some four months; and in the seventh month after their setting out they all gathered together as one man in Jerusalem. Preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple were commenced without delay. According to the orders which Cyrus had given, cedars were brought from Libanus by the Sidonians and Tyrians; hewers of stone and masons were procured; Levites were appointed to hasten forward the work of the Lord; and in the second year after the return from captivity the foundations were ready to be laid. The ceremony was carried out with great solemnity, the priests standing in their robes with trumpets in their hands, and the Levites with cymbals, all ready to break forth in hymns to the Lord. While the stones of the foundations were being laid, a joyful song of praise and thanksgiving arose, together with shouts of gladness from the people. Yet mingled with the cries of joy might have been detected a wail of sorrow, as the ancients who had seen the glory of Solomon's Temple wept aloud at the thought of its magnificence in comparison with what this second Temple gave promise of. Thus, amid the different emotions of joy and grief, the ceremony was brought to a close.

The foundations of the Temple are laid.

The Samaritans, who, as we have already seen, were the descendants of the Cuthean colonists introduced into Samaria after the captivity of the Ten Tribes, having learnt that a Temple was being erected in Jerusalem to the Lord, the God of Israel, came to Zorobabel and the chiefs of Juda, saying: "Let

The Samaritans oppose the building.

us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do: behold, we have sacrificed to Him since the days we were brought hither by the king of Assyria." Their request, however, was refused. Indignant that their services should be thus rejected, they made it their endeavour to throw every obstacle in the way, and to prevent, if possible, the carrying out of the work. To this end they sent an embassy to Babylon, accusing the Jews of disloyal motives, and so far succeeded in their object that, during the remainder of Cyrus's reign, and even during the reigns of his successors, Cambyses and Smerdis, the building had to be discontinued.

The Temple is finished and dedicated, B.C. 515.

Not till the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, after a lapse of fourteen years, was the work allowed to be resumed. Satisfied of the falsity of the accusations made against the Jews, Darius not only gave orders for the building of the Temple to be resumed, but himself contributed large sums towards the completion of the work. Stimulated by the encouraging words of Zacharias, and especially by those of Aggeus, who foretold that, although this second Temple in outward appearance would be as nothing in comparison with that of the first, yet that the presence of the Messias in it was to give it an exalted dignity, the Jews set about their undertaking with renewed energy; and in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, twenty years from its commencement, the Temple was finished and solemnly dedicated.

Esdras leads back a second body of captives, B.C. 458.

In the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Esdras, a virtuous priest, and one distinguished for his knowledge of the sacred writings, was commissioned by the king to go up to Jerusalem, and to take with him such of the Jews as were willing to accompany him. Presents of gold and silver from the king and his counsellors were given him to carry to Jerusalem to be spent on the Temple,

and many vessels for the services, besides a large sum of money with which to buy victims for sacrifice. Esdras left Babylon with a fresh band of captives, numbering 6,000, and, after having spent exactly four months on the journey, he arrived at Jerusalem, with authority to correct abuses and to appoint magistrates and judges who should punish evil-doers, and establish law and order in the State.

ansgressions the people.

Many abuses had already taken root in the sacred city, and these Esdras set himself vigorously to correct. Disregarding the law of Moses, many had intermarried with the idolatrous inhabitants of the country, and, as by so doing they had broken God's Covenant, they were rebuked for their wickedness by Esdras, who reminded them of the enormity of their sin, and of the many evils which must be the necessary result of such marriages. The people were moved to repentance, and all who had taken strange wives confessed their guilt, and solemnly promised to sever for ever such pernicious connections.

"A great council is said to have been appointed on the return of the Jews from Babylon, to reorganise the religious life of the people. It consisted of 120 members, who were known as the men of the *Great Synagogue*, of which Esdras was recognised as president." "By the zealous efforts of these enlightened men the institutes of religion were happily re-established, and an efficient and extensive provision made for the spiritual and moral culture of the people."

CHAPTER CVIII

MARDOCHAI AND ESTHER

suerus or xes.

The history of Esther, contained in the book which bears her name, takes us back to the reign of Assuerus, the Xerxes of Greek history, who ascended the Persian throne B.C. 486, and reigned till B.C. 465.

In the third year of his reign, Assuerus held a great feast in his royal palace of Susan, to which he invited the princes and all the chief nobles of the land; and when the festivities were at their height, he summoned Vasthi, his queen, to appear before him, decked in her crown, that all might be able to admire her surpassing beauty. Considering it beneath her royal dignity and contrary to her sentiments of decorum to comply with such a demand, Vasthi refused to obey, whereupon the king was very angry, and sought counsel of his wise men how he should act in calling the queen to account for having thus boldly refused to do his bidding. According to the advice of his chief counsellor, the king at once divorced Vasthi, and having thus deposed her from her high dignity, he commanded the most beautiful maidens in his kingdom to be sought out, that from them he might choose another queen.

Queen Vasthi is deposed.

Among those who were brought before him was a beautiful Jewish virgin, named Edissa or Esther, whose parents were both dead, and who had lived as the adopted daughter of her uncle Mardochai, of the tribe of Benjamin, and one of those led captive to Babylon with king Joachin. Esther's grace and beauty won the heart of the king, who set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vasthi.

Esther.

On one occasion, while Mardochai was posted at the palace gates, he discovered a plot which was being formed by two of the king's officers, Bagatha and Thara, to assassinate their royal master. Mardochai promptly disclosed the matter to Esther, who in turn warned the king of his impending danger. The conspirators were at once seized and put to an ignominious death, while Mardochai was assigned an apartment in the palace, and a record of his services was entered in the annals of the kingdom.

Mardochai detects a plot against the king.

nan.

It is generally supposed that the aim of this plot was to put Aman, the chief of the princes of the Court, on the throne, and the following passage certainly lends weight to such a view: "But Aman . . . was in great honour with the king, and sought to hurt Mardochai and his people, because of the two eunuchs of the king who were put to death."

nan's hatred Mardochai.

Whatever traitorous intentions Aman may have harboured, his favour with Assuerus was such that he was raised to the highest dignities in the State, and all the king's servants were commanded to bend the knee to him. Finding that Mardochai alone refused to pay him such abject homage, he was moved with feelings of the bitterest hatred against him, and, knowing him to be a Jew, resolved at once on his destruction and that of all the Jews still left in the king's dominions. He therefore went to Assuerus and represented to him that the Jews, who were scattered through all the provinces, were a people dangerous to the State, that they had their own laws and ceremonies, and that they, moreover, despised the king's ordinances.

ath of the wish exiles creed.

Seeing that his words had made an impression on Assuerus, he sought and obtained permission to act towards them as he pleased; and accordingly he issued a decree, bearing the king's seal, that in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the month, a day he had chosen by lot, all the Jewish exiles, men, women, and children, throughout the Persian dominions should be mercilessly slaughtered. All whom the edict concerned were filled with consternation, and on all sides could be heard lamentations—men and women weeping and wailing at the thought of the cruel death to which they had been so ruthlessly doomed. Hope they had none, except in the mercy of God, whom by prayer

and fasting they implored not to abandon them in their great need.

Esther to petition the king.

As the day drew near for the carrying out of Aman's barbarous decree, Mardochai, whose soul was filled with anguish, put on sackcloth, and sprinkling ashes upon his head, went about the city sorrowing and lamenting. When word of this came to Esther's ears, anxious to know the cause of his grief, she sent a trusted servant to make inquiries. Mardochai told the servant all that had happened, and gave him a copy of the edict, that he might show it to the queen, whom he was to entreat to go before the king and plead the cause of her people. Now, there was a law that anyone coming unbidden into the royal presence should be instantly put to death, unless the king extended to him his golden sceptre in token of mercy. Knowing that, if she neglected to act at once, the lives of her people must be sacrificed, Esther determined to brave the law. She accordingly sent back this message to her uncle: "Go, and gather together all the Jews whom thou shalt find in Susan, and pray ye for me. Neither eat nor drink for three days and three nights, and I with my maids will fast in like manner; then will I go in to the king, against the law, not being called, and expose myself to danger and to death."

Esther is graciously received.

On the third day Esther, clad in her royal apparel and accompanied by two of her maids, sought the presence of the king. Gently leaning for support on one of her maids, while the other bore her long and rich train, she strove with radiant smile and beaming countenance to conceal the anguish of her mind and the terrible fears of her heart. She passed on through the many doors that led to the inner court of the palace, till she stood before the king, whom she found seated upon his throne, and clad in his

royal robes, all glittering with gold and precious stones. Beholding him thus, Esther was filled with terror, and when she saw his eyes kindle with anger all colour left her cheeks, and she stumbled forward in a swoon. In a moment the king's countenance softened; he stepped quickly from his throne, and holding her up in his arms till she came to herself, caressed her, and said: "What is the matter, Esther? I am thy brother; fear not, thou shalt not die: this law is not made for thee, but for all others. Come near, then, and touch the sceptre." Not receiving any reply to his words, the king grew more concerned, and laying the golden sceptre on her neck, kissed her, asking anxiously: "Why dost thou not speak to me?" Having recovered somewhat, Esther feebly replied: "I saw thee, my lord, as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled for fear of thy majesty; for thou, my lord, art very admirable, and thy face is full of graces." Hardly had she uttered these words, when a second time she sank down fainting. Much distressed, the king called to her: "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? What is thy request? If thou shouldst ask even one-half of the kingdom, it shall be given to thee." When she was sufficiently restored to be able to speak, Esther answered: "If it please the king, I beseech thee to come to me this day, and Aman with thee, to the banquet which I have prepared." This Assuerus gladly promised to do, and sent for Aman to accompany him forthwith.

sther's nquet.

At the banquet the king showed great kindness to Esther, and again promised that, whatever her request might be, it should be fulfilled without delay. "My petition," said she, "is this: If I have found favour in the king's sight, let the king and Aman come again to my banquet to-morrow, and I will open my mind to the king."

That day Aman departed joyful and merry because of the honour that had been paid him; but as he was leaving the palace, whom should he see sitting before the gate but Mardochai, who neither rose to salute him nor deigned to pay him any mark of respect. Dissembling his rage, he returned home, and calling together his wife and his friends, said: "Though I am blessed with many children and possess great riches, though the king has advanced me above all his princes and servants, and queen Esther also hath invited no other to the banquet with the king but me, yet I think I have nothing so long as I see Mardochai the Jew sitting before the king's gate." They answered him: "Order a great beam to be prepared fifty cubits high, and in the morning request the king that Mardochai may be hanged upon it, and so thou shalt go full of joy to the banquet." This counsel pleased him, and he accordingly gave orders for such a gibbet to be prepared.

Aman prepares a gibbet for Mardochai.

That night the king was in a restless mood, and could not sleep, whereupon he commanded his scribe to bring him the chronicles of the former kings and the records of his own reign. When these were being read to him, and the scribe had reached the place where it was written how Mardochai had discovered the conspiracy of Bagatha and Thara, the king interrupted: "What honour and reward hath Mardochai received for this fidelity?" His courtiers answered: "He has received no reward at all." Just then Aman came into the inner court to make his request concerning Mardochai, and when the king heard that he was standing without, he gave orders for him to be admitted. Turning to him as he entered, the king asked: "What ought to be done to the man whom the king is desirous to honour?" Aman, thinking in his heart that the king intended to confer some great honour upon himself, immediately answered

Aman is compelled to honour Mardochai.

that such a one ought to be clothed with the king's apparel, that he ought to be set upon the king's horse, and, wearing the king's crown, be conducted through the city by the highest prince in the land, who should proclaim aloud: "Thus shall he be honoured, whom the king hath a mind to honour." "Make haste," said the king, "and take the robe and the horse, and do as thou hast spoken to Mardochai, the Jew, who sitteth before the gates of the palace."

Prediction of Aman's friends.

Aman had no choice but to obey; and having arrayed Mardochai as he himself had counselled, he led him through the streets of Susan, proclaiming aloud: "This honour is he worthy of, whom the king hath a mind to honour." When Aman returned to his house and told his friends what had befallen him, he received no comfort from their words, predicting as they did his speedy downfall: "If Mardochai," said they, "be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou canst not resist him, but thou shalt fall in his sight." Even while they were speaking, an officer came from the king, bidding him go quickly to the banquet prepared by the queen.

Esther's petition.

Towards the end of the feast, when Assuerus was heated with wine, he turned to the queen, and inquired: "What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee?" With great emotion, Esther answered: "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, give me my life for which I ask, and the lives of my people for whom I plead; for we are given up, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. And would to God we were sold for bond-men and bond-women: the evil might be borne with, and I would have mourned in silence; but now we have an enemy whose cruelty bringeth reproach upon the king."

In astonishment, the king demanded to know who was the

guilty author of such great misery, and who it was that had dared to entertain this evil design. Pointing to the trembling Aman, Esther exclaimed: "Behold, here is our adversary and most wicked enemy." Unable to meet the gaze of either the king or queen, Aman cast down his eyes in shame. Fired with indignation, Assuerus rose up, and withdrew from the banquet into the queen's gardens, where for a time he remained pacing about in deep thought. On his return, finding Aman abjectly pleading for his life at the feet of Esther, he ordered the guilty wretch to be put to death; and being told that he had prepared a gibbet on which to hang Mardochai, he exclaimed: "Hang Aman upon it!" Without delay the order was carried out; and the ring which the king had commanded to be taken from Aman was bestowed upon Mardochai, who was raised to the highest honours. The edict against the Jews was revoked, and letters were issued by the king commanding them to gather together, and in defence of their lives to kill and destroy their enemies.

Aman is hanged.

In memory of their deliverance from Aman's cruelty, the Jews instituted a new feast, the feast of Purim or Lots, from Aman's casting lots to determine on what day the destruction of the Jews should be carried out.

The feast of Purim or Lots.

In Esther we have a type of the Blessed Virgin, by whose intercession the head of the serpent is crushed, and letters of grace succeed to the handwriting that stood against us; while, from the words of Assuerus, we are reminded of the singular privilege of Mary in her Immaculate Conception —"This law is not made for thee, but for all others."

Esther a type of Our Lady.

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAS

CALLED ALSO THE

SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS

This Book takes its name from the writer, who was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Persia, and who was sent by him with a commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. It is commonly spoken of as the Second Book of Esdras, because it is a continuation of the history, begun by Esdras, of the state of the people of God after their return from captivity.

CHAPTER CIX

REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM, B.C. 444

In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, tidings from Jerusalem were brought by Hanani to his kinsman Nehemias, a Jew of noble birth and cup-bearer to the king, that the walls of the city were still broken down and the gates burnt, while the city generally presented a sad picture of desolation. This news filled the heart of Nehemias with grief; and he sought, by prayer and fasting, to move God to touch the king's heart that he might further the desire which he entertained of going to the help of his brethren in Jerusalem.

ehemias.

On one occasion, as Nehemias was presenting the cup to his royal master as usual, the king marked the expression of grief on his face, and said to him: "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou dost not appear to be sick? This is not without cause, but some evil, I know not what, is in thy heart." Nehemias answered: "O king, live for ever: why should not my countenance be sorrowful, seeing that the city of

ommission of ehemias.

the place of the sepulchres of my fathers is desolate, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire? If it seem good to the king, and if thy servant hath found favour in thy sight, I request that thou wouldst send me to the city where my fathers are buried, and I will rebuild it." The king listened favourably to his petition, and on his promising that he would return in a fixed time, sent him as governor to Jerusalem, with a commission to rebuild the walls and fortify the city. He also furnished him with letters calling on the governors of the various provinces through which he should pass to afford him all the assistance in their power. When this commission became known to Sanaballat the Horonite, and Tobias the Ammonite, they determined, through hatred of the Jews, to put every obstacle in the way of Nehemias. But knowledge of their ill-will had the effect of urging him to his task with greater zeal and speed.

Building of the walls.

When he came to Jerusalem, he spent the first three days in privately viewing the city; then calling together the priests, the nobles, and the magistrates, he made known to them his design, and showed them the letters which he had from the king, authorising him to proceed with the work. All vigorously applied themselves to the task; and, as different portions of the wall were assigned to different families, the breaches were soon closed, and the gateways and towers began quickly to rise.

Opposition of Sanaballat and Tobias

Sanaballat and Tobias, who had at first but ridiculed and scoffed at the work of the Jews, saying, "If a fox go up he will leap over their stone wall," now growing seriously alarmed, induced the Arabians, Ammonites, and Azotians, to attack the city before the walls should be finished.

Warned of the threatened danger by those Jews who dwelt without Jerusalem, Nehemias, not to be taken off

his guard, stationed at certain intervals behind the half-finished walls a number of men, some armed with swords and spears, others with bows. From that day, half of the people remained under arms, while the rest were occupied in building, and even they worked with one hand and held the sword in the other. With a trumpeter by his side, ready to sound the alarm in case of danger, Nehemias passed from point to point along the fortifications; and at night no man took off his clothes, but with his arms by his side he snatched what little rest he could, ready to start up at a moment's notice.

Nehemias arms the workers.

So great was the zeal and energy of the people that in fifty-two days the walls were finished and the gates set up. Nehemias, after this, appointed Hanani and Hananias to govern the city; then calling together the princes, the magistrates, and the people, he numbered them, and assigned Jerusalem as the permanent abode of the princes. Of the rest he chose, by lot, one-tenth to live in the city, and left the remainder free to dwell in whatever city, of Juda they might prefer.

The walls are finished.

On the first day of the seventh month the people were assembled in the street leading to the water-gate, and there on a raised platform, Esdras, with six Levites on his right hand and seven on his left, read aloud to them the Book of the Law of Moses. As soon as the Book was opened, the people all stood up, and with wrapt attention listened to the words which flowed from the lips of Esdras; and when he blessed the Lord, the great God, they all answered with a loud 'Amen,' and adored with their faces to the ground. After this the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated; and then, after the people had acknowledged the justice of God's chastisements, which their transgressions had

Esdras reads the law to the people.

brought upon them, they resolved to reform their conduct, and to comply more exactly with the Covenant, which they now solemnly renewed.

Nehemias reforms abuses.

In the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Nehemias was recalled to the Persian Court; yet we find him soon afterwards returning to Jerusalem, bent on reforming the many abuses which, during his short absence, had already begun to take root—such as mixed marriages and the profanation of the Sabbath, the observance of which had greatly degenerated, as we gather from the words of Nehemias himself: "In those days I saw some treading the (*wine-*) presses on the Sabbath, and carrying sheaves, and leading asses with wine, and grapes, and figs, and all manner of burthens, and bringing them into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. Some Tyrians also dwelt there, who brought fish and all manner of wares, and sold them on the Sabbaths to the children of Juda in Jerusalem."

Schismatical temple on Mount Garizim.

Marriages between Jews and women of Ammon, Moab, and Azotus, had increased to such an alarming extent that many children, unable to speak the language of the Jews, were heard speaking a dialect partly Jewish and partly Azotan. Even Manasses, one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliasib, the High Priest, had married the daughter of Sanaballat the Horonite, and for his wicked conduct, and for refusing to quit his heathen wife, was banished by Nehemias. He is then said to have gone to his father-in-law, who, as we have already seen, was noted for his enmity towards the Jews. Sanaballat at once appointed him as the chief priest of a rival temple on Mount Garizim, in Samaria, which he had received permission to set up. Here Manasses was joined by many other priests and Levites who also had refused to put away their heathen wives; and in this way was established the schismatical worship of the

Samaritans, resembling, as it did, in many points the religion of the Jews.*

When Nehemias died is uncertain. His praises are recorded by the Holy Spirit Himself, and his political and moral virtues must ever assign him an exalted rank among the true Israelites. "And let Nehemias be a long time remembered, who raised up for us our walls that were cast down, and set up the gates and the bars, who rebuilt our houses" (Ecclus. xlix. 15).

THE TWO BOOKS OF MACHABEES

These Books contain the history of God's people under the command of *Judas Machabeus* and his brethren. The word *Machabeus* is said by some to have been derived from the words which appeared on the standards of Judas, "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord," the initial letters of which, in Hebrew, are M. C. B. E. I. As to the authority of these Books, though they are not received by the Jews, they have been declared canonical by the Church, who, in settling her canon of the Scriptures, chose rather to be directed by the tradition she had received from the Apostles of Christ than by that of the Scribes and Pharisees, as St. Augustine remarks. The Second Book is not a continuation of the history contained in the First, nor does it treat of some of the later events mentioned there, but it relates many of the same facts at greater length. It is not known who was the author of these Books.

CHAPTER CX

PUNISHMENT OF HELIODORUS, B.C. 176

Of the history of the Jews from the time of Esdras and Nehemias to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a cruel persecutor of God's people, little is known. For a long time,

* How very forcibly does the schism, begun by Manasses, that he might retain his unlawful wife, remind us of a much more recent schism, the promoter of which was our own king, Henry VIII.

under the kings of Persia, they continued to enjoy peace and were left free to carry out the practices of their religion; but at last the Persian empire was brought to an end by the victories of Alexander the Great over Darius Codomanus at Issus, in Cilicia (B.C. 333), and again at Arbela, forty miles south-east of Ninive (B.C. 331).

Destruction of the Persian Empire.

We learn from Josephus that Alexander, whilst besieging Tyre, sent a letter to Jeddoa, the High Priest at Jerusalem, demanding auxiliaries and provisions for his army, and that the tribute which had formerly been sent to Darius should now be sent to him. To this the High Priest answered that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him, and that so long as Darius lived he would not transgress his promise. Upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry, and after Tyre and Gaza had fallen before him, he directed his march towards Jerusalem to punish the boldness of Jeddoa.

Alexander the Great advances against Jerusalem.

The Jews were filled with alarm on learning that Alexander was marching against them; but, warned in a dream to put aside all fear, Jeddoa calmed the feelings of the people, and with the priests in their sacerdotal robes went out in procession to meet the great Macedonian conqueror. When Alexander perceived the long train in the distance he was struck with astonishment; but when it drew near and he recognised in Jeddoa one whom he had seen in a vision while still at Dios in Macedonia, and who had promised that his arms should be crowned with victory, he marvelled greatly, and having saluted the High Priest, he treated him with the greatest respect, and accompanied him back to Jerusalem, where, following Jeddoa's directions, he offered sacrifice to the God of the Jews.

The High Priest goes out to meet Alexander.

The High Priest took occasion to show him the

Book of Daniel, some of the predictions of which pointed in very plain terms to the conquests of the Macedonians. This so pleased Alexander that he promised the High Priest that, not only should the Jews enjoy their own laws and unrestricted religious freedom, but that on every seventh or sabbatical year they should be exempted from tribute. He, moreover, added that if any of the Jews were willing to enlist in his army they should continue under the laws of their ancestors. Then, taking leave of Jeddoa, Alexander marched on Egypt.

lexander is nown the ook of Daniel.

"During the period of the *Greco-Macedonian* supremacy (B.C. 331-168) the Jews were successively subject, first to Alexander the Great (B.C. 332-323), then to the Greek kings of Egypt (B.C. 320-205), then alternately to those of Egypt and Syria (B.C. 205-198), and ultimately wholly to those of Syria (B.C. 198-167)."

When Alexander died (B.C. 323), his vast empire was divided among his generals; and thus arose the *four* kingdoms figuratively shown to the prophet Daniel, first under the appearance of a winged leopard with *four* heads, and then by the *four* horns which sprang from the he-goat's broken horn (Dan. vii. 8). Egypt and the adjacent countries, including Palestine, were allotted to Ptolemy Soter, to whom, and to his three immediate successors, the Jews were subject; but in the reign of the fifth Ptolemy Epiphanes, Jerusalem was taken by Antiochus the Great, the Greek king of Syria (B.C. 199), and, although retaken by the Egyptians, it passed again in the following year into the power of Antiochus.

ivision of lexander's mpire.

Under the kings of Syria, Palestine was divided into five districts, three of which—Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea—lay to the west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, while Trachonitis and Peraea were on the east.

Mission of Heliodorus to Jerusalem.

As under the Ptolemies, so under the Greek kings of Syria, the Jews were allowed full freedom of religious worship until, in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a cruel persecution was waged against them. Even under Seleucus Philopater, the successor of Antiochus the Great, the prevailing peace received a rude shock, owing to the ill-will of one Simon, of the tribe of Benjamin, against the High Priest Onias. Philopater, being in want of money to pay the tribute imposed by the Romans on his father, was informed by Simon, who was then overseer of the Temple, that immense sums of money, exceeding by far what was necessary for the maintenance of public worship, were stored away in the treasury. Although previous to this time Philopater had himself decreed that money from the royal treasury was to be supplied towards the sacrifices of the Temple, he nevertheless sent Heliodorus, one of his chief officers, to Jerusalem to demand the instant surrender of the money. Arrived at Jerusalem, Heliodorus was received with great courtesy and with the respect due to the king's messenger; but when he stated the object for which he had come and the commands of his royal master, he was informed by Onias that the money in question was partly the private property of one Hircanus, a man of great dignity, who had entrusted it to his safe keeping, and partly destined for the support of poor widows and orphans. Heliodorus replied that his orders were peremptory, and that he had no choice but to carry out the king's commands.

Heliodorus is miraculously beaten.

All, both priests and people, were filled with alarm; and the High Priest in particular was overwhelmed with grief at the thought of the threatened profanation of the House of God. Prayers were offered to the Lord, beseeching Him to guard His holy place from plunder, and not to suffer His sanctuary to be thus violated. Despite the

remonstrances of Onias, Heliodorus persisted in his determination to brook no opposition, and, intent on carrying out his bold resolve, entered the Temple with his guard, and pressed forward towards the treasury. Suddenly his attendants were overwhelmed with a feeling of dread, and fell down upon the ground powerless to do their leader's bidding. At the same time there appeared a horseman terrible to behold, clad in glittering armour, and seated on a horse which, with its fore-feet, struck out fiercely at Heliodorus, while two comely young men, beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, approaching him on either side, scourged him till he fell down speechless and unable to rise. Here he lay until a litter was procured, and he was borne half dead from the Temple.

e is healed rough the ayers of the igh Priest.

For some time Heliodorus hovered between life and death, and his servants had but little hope of his recovery; but after a while, having regained consciousness, he besought Onias to pray for him, and to call upon the Most High to spare him. This the High Priest gladly promised to do, and offered a sacrifice of health for his recovery; for he feared that, should evil befall Heliodorus, the king might suppose that he had suffered violence at the hands of the Jews. Now while Onias was praying, the same comely youths, that before had suddenly appeared guarding the entrance to the treasury, stood again by the side of Heliodorus, and said to him: "Give thanks to Onias the priest, because for his sake the Lord hath granted thee life; and thou, having been scourged by God, declare unto all men His wonderful power and the greatness of His works." When they had spoken thus, they vanished from sight. Being now restored to health, Heliodorus humbly returned thanks to the Almighty for having spared his life, and, with expressions of deep gratitude to Onias, returned with his troops to the king.

Seleucus did not yet despair of being able to possess himself of the treasure, and consulted with Heliodorus as to who would be the most fitting person to send to Jerusalem for this purpose. "If thou hast an enemy," said Heliodorus, "or a traitor to thy kingdom, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him scourged, if so be he escape; for there is undoubtedly in that place a certain power of God, and He destroyeth them that come to do evil to it."

CHAPTER CXI

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES SACKS JERUSALEM, B.C. 170

Ambition and wickedness of Jason.

SIMON continued in his malice, and sought by every means in his power to stir up enmity against the virtuous Onias, who in the end was compelled to leave Jerusalem. After the death of Seleucus, his brother Antiochus Epiphanes, or the *Illustrious*, a title which he had assumed to himself, usurped the kingdom to the prejudice of his nephew Demetrius, the son and heir of Seleucus. Onias had an ambitious brother, Jason, who wickedly sought the High-Priesthood for himself, and repairing to the king at Antioch, which was at that time the capital of Syria, he promised 440 talents of silver if he might be allowed to assume the dignity of High Priest in place of his brother Onias. He not only succeeded in obtaining the coveted office, but, by offering a further bribe, also secured the right of establishing in Jerusalem a gymnasium, in which the Jewish youths were trained in the games and exercises of Greece, and taught to adopt such pagan customs as tended to corrupt their morals. The depravity of the city became so general that even the priests, despising the services of the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices, hastened to take

part in the games, and abandoned themselves to the many vices of the Gentiles: "setting naught by the honours of their fathers, they esteemed the Grecian glories for the best." Moreover, to please the vanity of the king, many went to the length of styling themselves "Antiochians."

enelaus supants Jason.

Jason was not long destined to enjoy the honours which he had so wickedly acquired, but soon found a rival in the person of Menelaus, a brother of Simon. Being sent to Antioch to carry money to the king, Menelaus succeeded in supplanting Jason by the very same means that the latter had employed in ousting Onias from the sacred office. Jason was driven to seek refuge among the Ammonites, while Menelaus, to raise the required money, seized and sold some of the golden vessels of the Temple.

ias is acherously rdered.

Onias, hearing in his retreat at Antioch of the sacrilegious acts of Menelaus, was deeply grieved, and wrote him a letter, in which he severely reproved him for his daring impiety. At this time the king was in Cilicia, and Menelaus, taking advantage of his absence, bribed Andronicus, a noble to whom the affairs of the kingdom had been entrusted, to put Onias to death. The murder of so great and holy a priest not only sent a thrill of indignation through the Jews, but even the other nations were filled with horror at the terrible crime. When the king returned to Antioch, and learned what had happened, cruel though he was by nature, yet he could not refrain from tears, as he called to mind the solid piety of Onias. Filled with anger at the cruel wrong, he commanded Andronicus to be stripped of his purple, to be led through all the city, and then to be beheaded on the selfsame spot on which the saintly Onias had been murdered.

Soon after this, Antiochus marched an army into Egypt,

and gained a great victory over the Egyptians at Pelusium.

Antiochus invades Egypt, but is stopped by the Roman ambassador.

Making a second invasion in the following year, B.C. 170, he succeeded in subduing the whole country except Alexandria, when, as Josephus informs us, "he was driven not only from Alexandria, but out of all Egypt, by the declaration of the Romans, who charged him to let that country alone."

In the meantime strange signs were seen at Jerusalem:

Signs in the heavens over Jerusalem.

"it came to pass that through the whole city, for the space of forty days, there were seen horsemen running in the air, in gilded raiment, and armed with spears like bands of soldiers; and horses set in order by ranks, running one against another, with the shakings of shields; and a multitude of men in helmets, with drawn swords, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden armour." Such unusual portents filled the people with alarm, and all prayed that they might prove to be harbingers of good.

It was about this time that a false report of the death of Antiochus in Egypt was circulated, and

Jason captures Jerusalem.

Jason, thinking the opportunity a favourable one for recovering his lost dignity, gathered together a force of 1,000 men, and by a sudden assault succeeded in making himself master of the city, upon which Menelaus fled for safety to the fortress. Like an angry conqueror, Jason vented his fury on the defenceless citizens, and the streets ran with the blood of his fellow-countrymen.

His triumph, however, was but short-lived; for Antiochus

Antiochus takes Jerusalem and plunders the Temple.

no sooner heard that the Jews were in revolt, and that they had received the tidings of his supposed death with rejoicings, than, filled with rage, he marched on Jerusalem, which made but a feeble attempt to hold out against him.

Having taken the city by storm, he commanded his soldiers to slay without mercy, and to spare neither man nor woman, neither old nor young. For three days the slaughter continued, by the end of which time some 40,000 had been massacred, and as many more, during the same period, sold into slavery. Under the guidance of Menelaus, the king entered the Temple, removed the sacred vessels, plundered the treasury, and polluted the House of God by offering upon the altar unclean animals in sacrifice.

nd of Jason.

A second time Jason fled to the Ammonites, but at length, compelled to fly from city to city, and hated by all men as an enemy of his country and countrymen, he perished in a far-off land—Lacedemon.

CHAPTER CXII

THE JEWS PERSECUTED BY ANTIOCHUS—ARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR AND THE MACHABEES, B.C. 167

ersecutions ntinued by e governor pollonius.

When Antiochus withdrew from Jerusalem, he carried away with him from the Temple 1,800 talents, and, although the little resistance he had met with gave him no reason to boast of his prowess, he returned to Antioch full of pride on account of his victory. Before his departure he had appointed governors, more barbarous than himself, both in Jerusalem and in Samaria; and after two years' time Apollonius, a general hated for his cruelty, was sent to Jerusalem with an army of 22,000 men, with instructions to put to death every man he should find who was in the flower of his age, and to sell as slaves the women and children. Thus did Antiochus hope to blot out for ever the Jewish race along with their religion. When Apollonius arrived at Jerusalem, he pretended that he had come on an errand of peace, and

rested till the following Sabbath; then taking the people off their guard, he gave the signal for commencing the slaughter. The cruel butchery, once begun, soon became general. Houses were entered and their inmates dragged out into the streets to be slain; the city itself was given over to plunder; buildings were set on fire; the walls were thrown down; and a citadel commanding the approaches to the Temple was raised with lofty walls and towers, and garrisoned with the king's troops. Those who succeeded in escaping from Jerusalem fled into the desert, many remained in places of concealment, and only such were spared as promised to conform to the ways of the Gentiles.

A statue of Jupiter set up in the Temple.

The massacre perpetrated by Apollonius was soon afterwards followed by a great attempt on the part of Antiochus to destroy every vestige of Jewish worship. The Temple was defiled by every conceivable abomination, and turned into a place for revelling and wickedness; a statue of Jupiter Olympius was set up, and the Temple itself dedicated to Jupiter, while that on Mount Garizim was given up to the worship of Jupiter Hospitalis; and swine and unclean beasts were commanded to be used for the sacrifices. The Sabbaths and solemn festivals of the Jews were forbidden to be observed; but when the feast of Bacchus was celebrated, all were compelled to appear crowned with ivy, in honour of that deity. To conform to the law of circumcision was made a capital offence; and, that all memory of the Jewish religion might be blotted out, all copies of the Sacred Writings that could be discovered were ordered to be destroyed, and all such as were found to have them in their possession to be put to death.

The four great martyrdoms.

As a consequence of these cruel enactments, we find recorded in the Sacred Text four great martyrdoms: that of the two women with their children; the martyrdom of those who had met together privately in a cave to keep the Sabbath;

that of Eleazar at the age of 90; and finally, that of the seven brothers along with their mother.

Two women who were accused of having circumcised their children were publicly led through the streets of the city, and then, with their infants hanging at their breasts, were hurled headlong from the walls.

hat of the wo women ith their children.

A number of Jews who had secretly come together into a cave for the purpose of observing the Sabbath were surprised and burnt alive by the governor of the city.

lany Jews urnt alive in cave.

We next come to the death of the venerable Eleazar, who is said to have suffered at Antioch in the presence of the king. He was one of the chief scribes, a man advanced in years and of a comely countenance. Having been seized by one of the king's officers, he was pressed to eat swine's flesh in violation of the law; but choosing a glorious death in preference to a life purchased by disgrace, he went cheerfully forward to the torture prepared for him.

he venerable leazar.

At the sight of his gray hairs and venerable appearance, the bystanders were moved to pity; and taking him aside, they besought him to eat the lawful meat which they offered him, that by doing so he might appear to be obeying the king's commands, and thus save his life. The holy man scorned the advice, being unwilling to scandalise the weak by doing a thing which, lawful in itself, might be deemed a prevarication. "It doth not become our age," said he, "to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathens; and so they, through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age: I shall leave an example of fortitude to young men, if,

is martyrdom.

with a ready mind and constancy, I suffer a most honourable death for the most venerable and most holy laws." He was forthwith conducted to the place of execution, and those who before had shown mildness to him were filled with wrath on account of the words he had spoken. When, after a most cruel scourging he was about to die, he exclaimed: "O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, Thou knowest that whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body, but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear Thee." Thus did he die, leaving not only to the young, but to the whole nation, a memorable example of virtue and fortitude.

The Machabees; mother and seven sons.

Yet another glorious example of fidelity to God's holy law is given to us by the seven brothers, who, together with their mother, joyfully endured tortures still more cruel. Their only crime was refusal to do the king's bidding, when he commanded them to partake of food which the Jewish law forbade them to eat. Antiochus was present in person at their execution, and by first employing on the eldest the most barbarous torments that his cruel mind could devise, he thought to terrify the rest into submission. All had been cruelly scourged, but as this had not brought about the desired effect, the most diabolical means were now put in force to shake their constancy.

Martyrdom of the eldest son.

Being brought before the cruel monster, the eldest son replied to his threats: "What wouldst thou ask or learn of us? We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of God received from our fathers." The king, enraged at so bold an answer, commanded pans and brazen caldrons to be heated; and after having caused the tongue of the youth to be cut out, the skin of his head to be torn away, and the extremities of his hands and feet to be chopped off, he had him cast, while still alive, into the heated pan and slowly

roasted to death before the eyes of his mother and brethren, who stood encouraging one another to die courageously.

Heroic fortitude of all.

When it came to the turn of the second son, he displayed the same heroic fortitude as the first, and so with each of his brothers, who were tortured and done to death in a similar manner. One of them as he advanced to his torments exclaimed: "The Lord God will look upon the truth, and will take pleasure in us, as Moses declared in the profession of the canticle." Another spoke thus: "Thou destroyest us out of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life."

The mother's counsel to her youngest son.

All the time the mother stood by, bravely exhorting her sons in her own language to persevere, and bearing the agonising sight of their sufferings with unshaken courage, for the hope that she had in God. But when it came to the turn of the youngest, the king, having failed by threats to shake his firm resolve, resorted to persuasion and fair promises. He told him that if he would but consent to his wishes and turn from the laws of his fathers, he would take him as his friend, would heap riches and honours upon him, and that every happiness should be his; but finding that his promises availed him nothing, he called to the mother and entreated her to counsel her son, so that this, her last hope, might not be taken from her. The mother replied that she would indeed counsel her son, and bending down towards him, she said: "My son, have pity on me that bore thee and brought thee up to this age. I beseech thee look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that I may receive thee again with them."

Death of the mother and her youngest son.

While she was yet speaking, the young man called to the executioners: "For whom do you stay? I will not obey the commandment of the king, but the commandment of the law which was given us by Moses." Finding himself thus mocked, the king raged with fury, and heaped more barbarous cruelties upon him than upon any of those who had gone before him. At last it came to the mother's turn, and she also, having nothing now to fear for her sons, willingly gave herself up to death, that, having suffered with them in a cause so holy, she might with them share the joys of eternal life.

CHAPTER CXIII

MATHATHIAS AND HIS FIVE SONS FLY TO THE DESERT, B.C. 167

The Asmoneans.

Among those who at this time fled from Jerusalem, on account of the cruel scenes that were being enacted there, was a priest of the distinguished family of Joarib, named Mathathias, who with his five sons withdrew to his ancestral town of Modin, which was situated on an eminence between Jerusalem and the sea. They are called Asmoneans from Asamoneus, the great-grandfather of Mathathias, and they and their descendants ruled over the Jews for 126 years, till the accession of Herod in B.C. 37 put an end to the line of Asmonean princes.

As he contemplated the evils that were come upon Juda and Jerusalem, Mathathias exclaimed in the bitterness of his grief: "Woe is me: wherefore was I born to see the ruin of my people and the ruin of the holy city? The holy places are come into the hands of strangers; her Temple is become as a man without honour, the vessels of

her glory are carried away, her old men are murdered in the streets, and her young men are fallen by the sword of the enemies. What nation hath not inherited her kingdom, and gotten of her spoils? All her ornaments are taken away: she that was free is made a slave."

athathias fuses to com- y with the ng's edict.

Other Jews had joined the Asmoneans in their retreat, but their temporary respite was destined soon to be broken. No sooner did it become known that at Modin many were gathered together who had not yet complied with the king's edict than Apelles, an officer of Antiochus, was sent thither to compel them to offer sacrifice to Jupiter, to burn incense, and to depart from the law of God. Knowing the high character of Mathathias, and his great influence among the Jews, Apelles determined to call on him first to obey the command of Antiochus, and promised him wealth and honours if he would but set an example to his fellow-countrymen by sacrificing to the gods of the Syrians. Mathathias answered: "Although all nations obey king Antiochus, I and my sons and my brethren will be faithful to the law of our fathers. God be merciful unto us: it is not profitable for us to forsake the law and the justices of God: we will not hearken to the words of king Antiochus, neither will we sacrifice and transgress the commandments of our law, to go another way."

ath of the ostate Jew.

His words were scarcely ended when an apostate Jew, eager to win the king's favour by being the first to comply, came forward in the sight of all, and sacrificed as Antiochus had commanded. Fired with indignation at the sight, and remembering the words of the Law in reference to such a one, the old Asmonean sprang forward, and slew the miserable wretch at the altar; then calling on all who had any zeal for the Law to join him, he and his five sons, who were at his side in a moment, now turned upon Apelles,

and laid him also lifeless in the dust. Their next concern was to tear down the altar, and then to withdraw to the mountains, where they were joined by great numbers of the more zealous Jews. Before long they were in a position to take the field against the troops sent by Antiochus to track them.

A thousand Jews prefer death to breaking the Sabbath.

Many others imitated their example, and fled into the desert, where they abode in caves with their wives and children. Now, as these were on one occasion gathered together in a large cave to celebrate the Sabbath, they were surprised by a detachment of soldiers sent from Jerusalem and thinking that it would be unlawful to defend themselves on the Sabbath-day, they allowed themselves to be ruthlessly slaughtered to the number of a thousand. When tidings of this disaster reached the ears of Mathathias he was filled with grief, while those who were with him said one to another: "If we shall all do as our brethren have done, and not fight against the heathen for our lives, they will now quickly root us out of the earth." The following determination was accordingly arrived at: "Whosoever shall come up against us to fight on the Sabbath-day, we will fight against him; and we will not die as our brethren that were slain in the secret places."

Mathathias is joined by the Assideans.

Having been joined by the *Assideans*, a body of men bound by religious ties and zealous for the Law and worship of God, and by many others, Mathathias came down from the mountain fastnesses, and attacking the towns of Judaea, forced the king's troops to retreat before him, threw down the heathen altars, enforced the law of circumcision, inflicted punishment on those Jews who violated the law, and succeeded in restoring to the inhabitants the religion of their forefathers.

In a year's time Mathathias had well-nigh succeeded in driving back the enemies of his country; yet was he fully

aware that the mighty struggle with Antiochus was but commencing. Being now old, and feeling that his end was drawing near, he called his sons around him to receive his last blessing and to hear his final instructions. With feelings of deepest grief, the five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan, ranged themselves round the couch of the dying hero, who addressed them in these words: "Be ye zealous for the Law, O my sons, and give your lives for the Covenant of your fathers; and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name. I know that your brother Simon is a man of counsel: give ear to him always, and he shall be a father to you. And Judas Machabeus, who is valiant and strong from his youth up, let him be the leader of your army, and he shall manage the war of the people. You shall take to you all that observe the Law, and revenge ye the wrongs of your people." Then, having imparted to them his blessing, he was gathered to his fathers. His sons carried his body to Modin, and laid it in the sepulchre of his ancestors, and all Judaea mourned his loss.

ast counsel of athathias to s sons.

CHAPTER CXIV

JUDAS MACHABEUS, B.C. 166

JUDAS MACHABEUS now assumed the command, and was loyally supported by his brethren and by all who had rallied round the aged Mathathias. At this time his followers numbered 6,000 men, full of zeal, and eager to strike a blow for the independence of their country. The skill and valour of Machabeus entitled him to the honourable post conferred upon him by his father; and fully realising the responsibility of the trust reposed in him, like a giant "he put on a breastplate and girt his warlike armour about him: in his acts

las Macha- is takes mmand.

being like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey."

He defeats Apollonius, governor of Samaria.

Hearing that Apollonius, the spoiler of Jerusalem, was coming against him with a considerable army, he hastened out to meet him, and succeeded not only in routing his forces, but in slaying the general himself, whose sword he took and fought with during the remainder of his life. This success was quickly followed up by three other important battles, the first and third of which were fought near *Bethoron*, and the second at *Emmaus*. In each of these encounters he gained a glorious victory.

Seron in command of the Syrian troops.

It was against the Syrian general Seron that the first of these engagements was directed. On the death of Apollonius, Seron had been put in command of the Syrian troops, and, confident of victory, had boastfully exclaimed: "I will get a name and will be glorified in the kingdom, and will overthrow Judas and those that are with him that have despised the edict of the king."

Seron is defeated at Bethoron.

The two armies met near Bethoron, about seven leagues north of Jerusalem. The army of Seron, which included many apostate Jews, was large and formidable compared with that commanded by Judas; and when the followers of Machabeus saw the overwhelming forces drawn up against them, they said to him: "How shall we, being few, be able to fight so great and so strong a multitude, and we are ready to faint with fasting?" Judas answered: "It is an easy matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and there is no difference in the sight of the God of heaven to deliver with a great multitude, or with a small company. They come against us with an insolent multitude to destroy us, but we will fight for our lives and our laws: the Lord Himself will overthrow them before our face;

but as for you, fear them not." With that, he gave the signal for battle. The conflict was short, but decisive; for Seron having fallen, the Syrian army fled precipitately by the descent of Bethoron, pursued by the victorious Hebrews. Many of them were slain, and the rest fled into the land of the Philistines.

The Syrian army encamps near Emmaus.

So famous became the name of Machabeus that fear of him fell upon the surrounding nations; and when it was announced to the king how he had defeated the armies sent against him, Antiochus was enraged, and drew together another large army of 40,000 foot and 7,000 horse, which he placed under the command of three of his most famous generals, Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias. This vast force was despatched with all possible speed into the land of Juda, and encamped in the plain near Emmaus, a city lying two leagues west of Jerusalem. So confident were they of success that they even brought merchants with them, to whom they offered to sell the Jewish captives. Nicanor himself promised to sell ninety prisoners for a single talent, and, with the money raised, to pay the Roman tribute. Machabeus, who had encamped at Maspha, exhorted his men to be of good courage, to fight bravely for their sanctuary, and to place their hopes of victory in God. "Gird yourselves," said he, "and be valiant men, that you may fight with these nations that are assembled to destroy us and our sanctuary: for it is better for us to die in battle than to see the evils of our nation and of the Holies. Nevertheless, as it shall be the will of God in heaven, so be it done."

The plan to surprise Machabeus fails.

That night Gorgias chose 5,000 foot and 1,000 of his best horsemen, and, guided by renegade Jews, secretly left the camp, with the intention of taking Machabeus unawares. But Judas, who had received information of the plan of his wily foe,

caused the camp-fires to be lit as usual, and set out under cover of the darkness by a circuitous route for Emmaus, where he arrived just before daybreak. Such a bold step Gorgias had not conceived possible, and he was astounded on reaching the camp of Machabeus to find it already deserted. He at once attributed their flight to fear, and believing that they had fled to the hills for safety, gave orders for immediate pursuit.

The Syrian army routed at Emmaus.

Meantime Judas, with 3,000 imperfectly-armed followers, had made his way unperceived to a position commanding a view of the Syrian camp. Here they remained till daybreak; then, after he had exhorted his men to put their trust in the Almighty Lord, and to remember in what manner their fathers were saved in the Red Sea, he gave the signal for battle. In a moment the trumpets rang out, and the war-cry of the Jews echoed from the hills. Consternation filled the enemy's camp. The attack had been so unexpected that the Syrians, in their alarm, ran to and fro, utterly disorganised by the sudden panic which quickly spread through the whole host. Many were slain in the camp, while those who took to flight were hotly pursued by the victorious Hebrews, who followed them as far as Gezeron, Azotus, and Jamnia, and even to the plains of Idumaea. On that occasion there fell of the Syrians 3,000 men.

Gorgias flies before Machabeus.

Calling his men from the pursuit, Judas said to them: "Be not greedy of the spoils, for there is war before us: behold Gorgias and his army are near us in the mountain. Stand ye now against our enemies, and overthrow them, and you shall take the spoils afterwards with safety." Gorgias, who had meanwhile sought in vain for the army of Machabeus, was returning with his wearied troops, when his attention was arrested by the sight of the smoke which issued from the

Syrian camp. When they realised that their camp had been attacked and burnt, a sudden fear came upon them, and they, too, abandoned themselves to disorderly flight. Judas now came up and collected the spoil, after which he and his little band, laden with rich booty, returned home, and sang a hymn of thanksgiving, blessing God in heaven because He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever.

Bethoron, rsias is put to ght.

Antiochus, who was absent in Persia at this time, had appointed Lysias to manage the affairs of the kingdom; and when news was brought to the latter that his generals had been defeated by Judas, he determined to command the next expedition in person. He accordingly collected an army of 60,000 foot and 5,000 horse, and marched into Judaea as far as Bethoron. To oppose this great force, Judas could muster only 10,000 men; but so bravely did they advance to the attack that Lysias was put to flight, with a loss of 5,000 men, and was compelled to withdraw to Antioch.

las repairs, ifies, and rnishes the mple.

These victories gave Judas the long-wished-for opportunity of proceeding to Jerusalem for the purpose of restoring the city and the Temple, which were in a most lamentable state of dilapidation, owing to the devastations of the Syrians. Going up to Mount Sion with his army, he saw the Sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, the gates burnt, shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest, and the chambers adjoining the Temple thrown down. There still remained in the citadel a garrison of Syrian soldiers. To keep these in check, if they should attempt to molest him, he detached a body of men to watch them, while he and the rest performed what religion required of them. He next set to work to choose priests of unblemished character, that they might cleanse the holy places, and remove the altars and statues of the false

gods which had been set up in the House of God. After a new altar of holocausts had been built and dedicated in place of the original one which had been profaned by impure victims, and by having had an altar of Jupiter erected above it, the sacred veils were hung up, new vessels were brought in, the golden candlestick, the Altar of Incense, and the Table of Show Bread were again put in their respective places, and, to the great joy of all, the Temple was rededicated with solemn ceremonial. In memory of this event, a festival, called the *Feast of Dedication*, was appointed to be celebrated annually, and to be kept up, amid great rejoicing, for eight days.

Jealousy of the surrounding nations.

When the surrounding nations learnt that the altar and the sanctuary were built up as before, they were angry; and, eager to oppress the Jews on every occasion, they rose up against them, resolved to destroy them out of their midst. But the energy of Judas was untiring. Attacking them individually in quick succession, he passed through their respective countries, reducing their cities and strongholds, and by his bravery repressing all opposition. As many as eight victories are recorded of him in his endeavours to put down these attempts to blot out God's chosen people.

Judas orders sacrifice and prayers for the dead.

After a battle with Gorgias, the governor of Idumaea when Judas with his company came to bury their fallen comrades, they found concealed beneath the tunics of the slain some of the votive offerings which had been hung in the temples of the idols at Jamnia, and which they had taken away contrary to the prohibition of the Law, probably with the intention of bringing them to Judas. Be this as it may, Judas took a charitable view of their fault, hoping that their temporal punishment might have served to expiate their guilt. The Jews betook themselves to prayer, and besought the Lord that the sin which had

been committed might be forgotten. They trusted that these men, who had died fighting for the cause of God and religion, might find mercy, either because they were excused from mortal sin by ignorance, or might have repented of their sin at the time of their death. Judas collected 12,000 drachms of silver, which he sent to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead; for, adds the Sacred Text, "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Mac. xii. 46).

CHAPTER CXV

DEATH OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, B.C. 164—SION BESIEGED

ABOUT this time Antiochus made an expedition into Persia, for the purpose of attacking Elymais, a wealthy city, in which was a very rich temple of Diana, adorned with much gold, and containing breastplates and shields, left there by Alexander, the son of Philip, king of Macedon. But the people of Elymais had been warned of his intention, and not only defended their city, but even caused him to beat a hasty retreat to Babylon.

tiochus compelled to retreat m Elymais.

Having lost a great part of his army in this fruitless attempt on Elymais, he was bitterly lamenting his ill-fortune, when information reached him of the defeat of those generals whom he had left to subdue Judaea. The news served but to aggravate the vexation he already felt, and he vowed to take a terrible revenge, declaring that he would go to Jerusalem and make it the common burying-place of the whole Jewish nation. But the Lord, who seeth all things, struck him with an incurable disease, which so racked

tiochus is icken with a thsome ease.

him with pain that he feared his end to be near. Still puffed up with pride, and breathing fury against the Jews he mounted his chariot and commanded his servants to press forward with the utmost speed. It was while he was hastening on that an accident happened to his chariot, and he was thrown violently to the ground. Bruised and unable to rise he who before had seemed to himself "to be able to command even the waves of the sea, and to weigh the heights of the mountains in a balance," had now to be borne in a litter bearing witness in his own person to the manifest power of God. Worms swarmed out of his body; and whilst he passed his days in sorrow and pain, his flesh began to fall off, "and the man that thought a little before he could reach to the stars of heaven, no man could endure to carry for the intolerable stench."

The wretched end of Antiochus.

But at last the pride of the haughty Antiochus was humbled. As his pains grew more and more unbearable, he confessed that the miseries that had befallen him were a fitting punishment for having raised himself up against God; for, said he "it is just to be subject to God, and a mortal man should not equal himself to God." This wicked man then prayed to the Lord for mercy, promising that he would make the city of Jerusalem independent, that he would grant full liberty to the Jews, that he would adorn the Temple with goodly gifts; yea, also, that he would become a Jew himself, and would go through the whole earth declaring the power of God. But as his repentance was not on account of the offences he had committed against God but purely on account of his present sufferings, he died miserably, a model of those false penitents who are actuated by no other motive than that of servile fear.

He was succeeded by his son, Antiochus Eupator, then a mere boy, who had been imbued with such a hatred for the Jews that one of his first acts was to send against

them an army which would defy all opposition, and completely overwhelm the devoted nation. He himself marched out of Antioch with it, accompanied by Lysias, who was in command; and as the Syrians had failed in all their previous attempts to reach Jerusalem by the north, he now tried to enter Judaea by the south. He accordingly advanced through Idumaea and encamped at Bethsura, a strong city some twenty miles south of Jerusalem. His forces consisted of 100,000 foot-soldiers and 20,000 horsemen, besides thirty-two elephants trained to battle. They proceeded to lay siege to Bethsura, but the inhabitants defended their city bravely, and sallying out against them, burnt and destroyed their military engines.

he Syrians siege Beth-ra.

At this time Machabeus was besieging those Syrians who still held the stronghold at Jerusalem; but when he heard that Antiochus was at Bethsura, he raised the siege of the citadel and advanced to meet him. He marched as far as the defiles of Bethzacharam, where he halted and prepared for battle. When the enemy issued from the passes, there marched by every elephant, 500 horsemen, and 1,000 men in coats of mail, and with helmets of brass on their heads. Each animal had an Indian driver, and bore on its back a strong wooden tower, which concealed a number of archers. As the rest of the army descended the hill sides, the sun shone upon the shields of gold and brass and they became "like lamps of fire," and reflected a dazzling brightness. When drawn up, the Syrian army, presented a formidable front to the small but undaunted band of Machabeus. As they advanced they raised their battle-cry, and all the hills around echoed with the sound.

achabeus at e defiles of ethzacharam.

Undismayed, the Jewish army, led on by Machabeus, advanced to the fight, and so hotly was the battle

contested that, before the Jews withdrew, as many a 600 Syrians lay dead upon the field. By deed of wonderful daring, but at the cos of his own life, Eleazar, the brother of Juda all but turned the tide of battle. Seeing an elephan taller than the rest, and more conspicuous by reaso of its glittering armour, and believing that the kin was upon its back, he cut his way through the midst o those who surrounded it; then, stooping suddenly unde the animal, he plunged his sword into its body, but wa himself crushed to death by its fall.

Heroic death of Eleazar.

Despite the heroic exertions of the Jews, they were however, compelled to fall back on Jerusalem owing to the vastly superior numbers of th enemy. Here Judas prepared to undergo siege, having retired to the Temple, which alone wa fortified and in his power; the city itself was defenceles while the citadel of Sion held out for the king.

The Jews retreat to Jerusalem.

Having brought about the surrender of Bethsur Antiochus next advanced on Jerusalem, an closely invested the Temple. The Jewis army was badly provisioned, and must soo have been reduced to subjection had it not been that at th critical stage news reached the king that Philip, whom th late king had appointed regent, was returning from Pers with an army, resolved on securing for himself the manag ment of affairs which Lysias had usurped.

The Temple besieged.

Lysias easily persuaded the young prince that peace wa now most expedient, and conditions wer granted to the Jews which would have bee very advantageous if they had been faithfull observed. In spite of the oath he had taken, Antiochu no sooner saw the strength of the walls which had bee erected for the protection of the Temple than he cause them to be demolished, and then departed in haste fo

Peace concluded.

Antioch, having first formally appointed Machabeus governor and prince from Ptolemais in the north to the Gerrenians in the south.

ntiochus upator ethroned by emetrius oter.

Arrived at Antioch, the king found Philip in possession of the city; but as he could offer only a feeble resistance, he was taken and slain. Antiochus himself was not destined to survive him long; for in B.C. 162, after a short reign of two years, he was dethroned by Demetrius Soter, his cousin, the son of that Seleucus on whose death Epiphanes had usurped the crown. Demetrius, at the time of his father's death, was detained as a hostage at Rome; but escaping thence, he came to Tripoli, a city of Syria, and pretending that he had been sent by the Romans, was joyfully received by the people. One of his first acts after securing the throne was to put Antiochus and Lysias to death.

CHAPTER CXVI

DEATH OF JUDAS MACHABEUS, B.C. 161

enelaus is put death.

WHEN the Syrians left Jerusalem for Antioch, they carried off with them the wicked Menelaus, who had assumed the High-Priesthood, and put him to death at Berea, a city of Syria. Alcimus, who was chosen in his stead was, if possible, even more wicked and unscrupulous than his predecessor, and, although appointed High Priest, he was never permitted to discharge the duties of the sacred office, which was held by the Machabees. We learn from Josephus that Onias, son of Onias III., who ought to have been recognised as High Priest, fled into Egypt, and was permitted by Ptolemy Philometor and his queen, Cleopatra, to build a temple at Heliopolis similar to that at Jerusalem, but on a less magnificent scale; and that here,

finding other Jews like himself, and among them priests and Levites, he had the Divine services performed.

The treachery of Alcimus the High Priest.

Although not unfavourably disposed at first towards the Jews, Demetrius was induced to take violent measures against them through the treachery of Alcimus, who, with a number of renegades, having gained the king's favour by presents, thus falsely accused Judas and the people: "They among the Jews who are called Assideans, of whom Judas Machabeus is captain, nourish wars and raise seditions, and will not suffer the realm to be in peace. For I also, being deprived of the High-Priesthood, am now come hither, principally, indeed, out of fidelity to the king's interests, but in the next place also to provide for the good of my countrymen; for all our nation suffereth much from the evil proceedings of these men, nor is it possible that the State should be quiet as long as Judas liveth."

Bacchides is sent to reinstate Alcimus.

Stirred to anger by such evil reports, Demetrius sent an army into Judaea, which he placed under the command of Bacchides, a trusted general, whom he charged to take exemplary vengeance on the children of Israel, and to reinstate Alcimus in his office of High Priest of the great Temple. Although this army reached Jerusalem, it was finally compelled to return without having accomplished the end for which it had been raised.

Nicanor leads an army into Judaea.

A second and greater army, commanded by Nicanor, a powerful noble, and sworn enemy of the Jews, was sent against Judas. Having come up to Jerusalem, Nicanor endeavoured at first to get Judas into his power by treachery, and sent him a message of peace, promising on oath that he had come with no evil intention, but only to make known the wishes of the king. Peace was concluded; and for a time Nicanor and Judas lived on terms of friendship, till Alcimus,

believing this outward display of goodwill to be sincere, secretly informed the king. Demetrius sent back word that he was displeased with the covenant of friendship, and that Machabeus must be sent without delay to Antioch. By this time, however, the suspicions of Judas had been aroused, and, unknown to Nicanor, he withdrew from the city. Enraged at being thus duped, and believing Judas to have taken refuge in the Temple, he went to the priests and threatened that, if Machabeus were not instantly delivered up to him, he would tear down the altar and beat the Temple level with the ground. But when he discovered that Judas had left the city, he withdrew as far as Bethoron, till he was joined by other Syrian troops; and Machabeus, with 3,000 soldiers, pitched his camp four miles from him, at the village of Adarsa.

das is
couraged by
vision.

Placing his trust in God, Judas exhorted his men not to fear the coming of nations, but to remember the help they had before received from Heaven. Then raising up his hands, he prayed thus: "O Lord, when they that were sent by Sennacherib blasphemed Thee, an angel went out and slew of them a hundred and eighty-five thousand: even so destroy this army in our sight to-day." His prayer was heard. In a vision there appeared to him the holy priest Onias, who had been put to death at Antioch, and the prophet Jeremias, who, stretching out his right hand, gave Judas a golden sword, bidding him: "Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of Israel."

icanor is
feated and
ain.

When Judas related to the soldiers what he had seen, they were elated with joy, and, confident of victory, advanced to the fight. Shouting their war-songs, and with sound of trumpet, the troops of Nicanor advanced to meet them, but were

scattered like chaff before the sturdy followers of Machabeus, who, fighting with their hands but praying to the Lord with their hearts, slew no fewer than five-and-thirty thousand. Nicanor himself was among the slain; and when his body was found, Judas gave orders that his tongue, which had uttered so many blasphemies, should be cut to pieces and given to the birds, but that his head and his right arm should be severed from the body and carried to Jerusalem, because they had been lifted in proud boasts against the Holy House of the Almighty God.

Judas enters into a league with the Romans.

Judas had heard much of the fame and power of the Romans, and resolved to employ their friendship for the purpose of securing liberty to his country. Choosing Eupolemus, the son of John, and Jason, the son of Eleazar, he sent them to Rome to conclude a treaty of peace and alliance with the Senate. The ambassadors were favourably received, and the following treaty was drawn up and sent, engraven on brass, to Jerusalem: "Good success be to the Romans and to the people of the Jews, by sea and by land, for ever; and far be the sword and enemy from them. But if there come any war upon the Romans or the Jews, or upon any of the confederates of either, the other nation shall help, according as the time shall direct, with all their heart: neither shall they assist the enemy by furnishing them with wheat, or arms, or money, or ships. And if, after this, one party or the other shall have a mind to add to these articles, or take away anything, they may do it at their pleasure: and whatsoever they shall add, or take away, shall be ratified." At this time, too, the following letter was addressed from the Roman Senate to Demetrius: "Why hast thou made thy yoke heavy upon our friends and allies the Jews? If, therefore, they come again to us complaining of thee, we

will do them justice, and will make war against thee by sea and land."

Before the ambassadors could return, however, Demetrius sent another army against Machabeus to avenge the death of Nicanor. This force, which consisted of 20,000 foot and 2,000 horse, was put under the command of Bacchides, and was also accompanied by Alcimus. Bacchides penetrated as far as Berea, in Benjamin, when, hearing that Judas, with 3,000 men, was encamped at Laisa, he led his army against him. Wearied with the long-continued struggle, the soldiers of Machabeus at length began to lose heart, and when they learnt the strength of the Syrian forces, great numbers fled away, so that in the end only 800 were left to support their heroic leader. Even the brave Judas was at first cast down at seeing so many desert his standard; but bracing himself to the task before him, he called to those about him: "Let us arise and go against the enemy." But these endeavoured to dissuade him, exclaiming: "We shall not be able: let us save our lives now, and return to our brethren, for we are but few." "God forbid," responded Judas, "that we should do this thing, and flee away from them: but if our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our glory."

Bacchides is again sent into Judaea.

From morning till evening the battle raged. Judas attacked the enemy's right wing, broke their ranks, and put them to flight; but whilst hotly pursuing them he was surrounded by the left wing, and, overwhelmed with numbers, the brave hero fell, together with most of his followers. After the battle his body was found among the slain, and was buried by his brothers, Jonathan and Simon, in the sepulchre of their father at Modin. All the people bewailed his death, and mourning for him, cried: "How is the mighty man fallen that saved the people of Israel!"

Judas Machabeus is slain in battle.

Thus died this great hero. "The most mighty in the sight of men," says St. Ambrose, "may fall; but the fortitude of Judas, proved by former heroic actions and by success, was now rendered perfect by this most glorious death." Never was there a more accomplished and virtuous champion. He had all the qualities of a holy priest and a valiant soldier, as well as of a religious prince, always bent on promoting the glory of his people.

Character of Machabeus.

CHAPTER CXVII

JONATHAN MACHABEUS, HIGH PRIEST AND PRINCE

After the death of Judas the country was in great distress from famine; and the cruelties inflicted by Bacchides on the faithful Jews surpassed any they had experienced since the cruel persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. When those who remained of the faithful followers of Judas saw that the nation was on the brink of destruction, they came to Jonathan, and begged him to put himself at their head in place of his late brother. He consented to their request, and was unanimously appointed to be the general of the Jewish army. Unable at first to meet Bacchides in the field, Jonathan prudently retired with his followers into the desert of Thecua, seven miles south of Bethlehem.

Jonathan succeeds his brother Judas.

Alcimus, who still usurped the dignity of High Priest as in the lifetime of Judas, soon after this met with a sudden end. Having given orders for the walls of the inner court of the Temple to be thrown down, he was seized with paralysis while intent on seeing his instructions carried out, and, unable to utter a word, died in great anguish.

Alcimus dies miserably.

nathan fights gainst Bac- ides.

On one occasion when Bacchides heard that Jonathan was encamped on the bank of the Jordan, he surprised him on the Sabbath-day, thinking to gain an easy victory; but Jonathan, thus driven to bay, briefly addressed his followers: "Let us arise and fight our enemies: behold the battle is before us, the water of the Jordan is on this side and on that, and there is nowhere to turn aside." There was no time for more, as the enemy was pressing upon them. Jonathan rushed impetuously upon the foe, and, perceiving Bacchides in front of him, he raised his arm to smite, but the Syrian avoided the stroke by rapidly retreating backwards. Seizing the opportunity, Jonathan, with his companions, leaped into the river and escaped, leaving a thousand of their opponents dead upon the bank. Soon after this Bacchides returned to Antioch, and for the next two years the Jews were left in peace.

acchides is efeated at ethbessen.

Returning again at the end of that time on the invitation of those wicked Jews who were hostile to the Machabees, Bacchides attacked the stronghold held by Jonathan at Bethbessen, in the desert of Jericho; but being repulsed with heavy loss, he in his anger slew a great number of those who had counselled the expedition, and, after concluding peace with Jonathan, and promising on oath that he would no more harm the Jews, finally withdrew from their country. "So the sword ceased from Israel, and Jonathan dwelt in Machmas, where he began to judge the people, and he destroyed the wicked out of Israel." Machmas was chosen by Jonathan as his residence, because the citadel of Sion was still in the hands of the enemy.

Jonathan's friendship soon came to be sought by those who had been his most untiring foes. In B.C. 153, Alexander Bales, who represented himself to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes, laid claim to the Syrian crown, and

was even acknowledged both by the Romans and the Egyptians, who were pleased to find a rival for Demetrius, now odious alike both to Jews and to Syrians. Both rivals were eager to secure the support of Jonathan. Demetrius was the first to make overtures to him, and gave him authority to gather together an army and to make arms, at the same time commanding the hostages in the citadel of Sion to be delivered up to him. Upon this, Jonathan went to dwell in Jerusalem, and at once set to work to repair the city.

Alexander Bales and Demetrius seek the friendship of Jonathan.

Soon after his arrival there came ambassadors from Alexander with a letter for him, which read as follows: "King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greeting. We have heard of thee, that thou art a man of great power, and fit to be our friend: now, therefore, we make thee this day High Priest of thy nation, and decree that thou be called the king's friend. Be of one mind with us in our affairs, and keep friendship with us." Along with the letter they brought him a purple robe and a crown of gold, in which he appeared for the first time on the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jonathan becomes High Priest and prince.

Additional privileges were offered by Demetrius, but Jonathan finally declared for Alexander, who soon afterwards defeated and slew Demetrius, after he had reigned twelve years. When Alexander was firmly established on the throne of Syria, he wrote to Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, requesting the hand of his daughter, Cleopatra. Ptolemy gladly consented to the proposal; and the two kings, having appointed to meet at Ptolemais, where the marriage was to be celebrated, desired Jonathan also to be present on the occasion. Jonathan accepted the invitation, and went to Ptolemais, carrying with him rich

Demetrius is defeated and slain by Alexander.

presents for the kings, by whom he was received with every mark of esteem and respect. Many discontented Jews had gone before to lay their complaints against him, but when they saw him treated with royal honours, and as the equal of the kings themselves, they fled away secretly, lest mischief should befall them. As for Jonathan, Alexander not only made him governor and partaker of his dominion, but numbered him among his chief friends.

exander is in.

After Alexander had been on the throne but a few years, a rival appeared in the person of Demetrius Nicator, son of Demetrius Soter, who with his brother had been sent by their father into Crete, that they might be out of danger. Having collected an army in Crete, and being joined by the Egyptian king, who had quarrelled with his son-in-law, Demetrius succeeded in forcing Alexander to seek refuge in Arabia, where he was afterwards slain by an Arabian chief, who sent his head to Ptolemy.

nathan feats Apollonius, the eneral of emetrius.

To punish Jonathan for having favoured his rival, Demetrius sent an army against him under the command of Apollonius; but he was defeated with great loss, and Jonathan returned to Jerusalem laden with spoil.

eace between ie Syrians and ie Jews.

Peace was at length concluded between the Syrians and the Jews, and Demetrius, finding that quiet and order had been restored throughout his dominions, dismissed his Syrian troops, retaining only the Cretan mercenaries. This act caused feelings of dissatisfaction and jealousy among the Syrians, who took it ill to see strangers trusted more than themselves. Tryphon, one of his generals, was not slow to take advantage of the prevailing discontent. This wily plotter, whose real aim was eventually to secure the crown for himself, induced Emalchuel the Arabian, guardian of Antiochus, the youthful son of Alexander Bales, to give the

prince into his charge, that he might restore him to the throne of his father. Demetrius, perceiving the danger, sent to Jonathan for assistance, in return for which he promised to remove the garrisons from the strongholds in Jerusalem and other cities, which had been a constant source of annoyance to the Jews. Three thousand picked men were quickly despatched to Antioch, and not only did they succeed in quelling the insurrection which had already broken out in the city, but were the means of saving the king's life. Demetrius, however, failed to keep his promise, whereupon Jonathan took the part of Antiochus, who finally became king.

Jonathan is made prisoner by Tryphon.

The scheming Tryphon, believing the crown to be now within his reach, but seeing an obstacle to his ambition in the person of Jonathan, resolved to get him into his power by an act of treachery. Pretending the greatest friendship for him, he succeeded in luring him into Ptolemais; and no sooner had he entered the city with but 1,000 attendants than the gates were shut, and his brave followers put to the sword. Tryphon afterwards treacherously slew the young king Antiochus, and usurped the crown for himself.

CHAPTER CXVIII

SIMON MACHABEUS, HIGH PRIEST, B.C. 144-135

Simon is chosen leader.

As John Machabeus had been slain at Madaba, some fifteen miles north-east of the Dead Sea, the only son of Mathathias now left was Simon, who ruled the Jews for nine years, combining in his person both the dignity of prince and of High Priest. The people thus joyfully welcomed his accession to power: "Thou art our leader in the place of Judas and Jonathan: fight our battles, and we will do whatsoever thou shalt say to us."

Having completed the fortifications of Jerusalem, Simon quickly raised an army for the purpose of opposing Tryphon, who was marching against Judaea, bearing with him Jonathan, whom he had kept a close prisoner. Tryphon had not expected to meet with any great opposition, so that when he learnt what force was coming against him, he sent messengers before him to say to Simon: "We have detained thy brother Jonathan for the money that he owed to the king by reason of the affairs of which he had the management. But now send a hundred talents of silver and his two sons for hostages, that when he is set at liberty he may not revolt from us." Believing that he spoke deceitfully, yet fearing to offend the Jews if he should leave anything undone to secure the release of Jonathan, he faithfully complied with the conditions laid down. But no sooner did the cruel tyrant get the innocent sons of Jonathan into his power than he slew both them and their father, and then withdrew into Syria.

nathan is put death by ryphon.

Simon was filled with grief, and all the people mourned for their death; and when they had recovered the body of Jonathan they buried it at Modin in the tomb of his father and mother and brethren, over which they erected a lofty monument of polished stone.

mb of the chabees.

Demetrius, who, although driven from Antioch, still possessed a great part of Asia, was now loyally supported by Simon, and in return recognised him as High Priest, granted the Jews immunity from tribute and taxes, and promised them their freedom. Thus, in the year B.C. 143, after a hard and protracted struggle, was their independence acknowledged.

vish independence, 143.

Peace being firmly established under Simon, the Jews, in a great assembly of the priests, and of the people and princes of their nation, recorded the public benefits that

had been conferred on their nation by the heroic efforts of the sons of Mathathias: "Forasmuch as there have often been wars in our country, and Simon and his brethren have put themselves in danger, and resisted the enemies of their nation for the maintenance of their holy places and the Law, and have raised their nation to great glory; the Jews and their priests have consented that Simon should be their prince and High Priest for ever, *till there arise a faithful prophet.*" They then commanded that this writing should be engraved on tables of brass, and set up within the sanctuary in a conspicuous place. The line of the royal High Priests, which was begun in Jonathan, continued in his family till Herod began to sell the sacred office, and the faithful Prophet, Christ, appeared.

The government and High-Priesthood made hereditary in Simon.

Simon fortified the strongholds of Judaea, seized and destroyed the castle of Sion, which for twenty-five years had been occupied by the Syrians repaired the walls of Jerusalem, refortified the mountain of the Temple that was near the castle, and chose it as his residence.

Simon strengthens the fortresses of his kingdom.

When Antiochus Sidetes came to the throne as the successor of Demetrius, he confirmed Simon in all the rights that had been granted to him by his predecessors, and added a further concession —the sovereign right of coining his own money. Yet, forgetful of his promises to the Jews, we find him later on turning against them, and sending his general, Cendebeus, with a large army to harass Judaea. Cendebeus was defeated and put to flight by Simon's sons John and Judas, who pursued him as far as Cedron, and succeeded in driving him out of their country.

His rights confirmed by the new king of Syria.

Simon's son-in-law, Ptolemy, governor of Jericho, aspiring to the sovereignty, became guilty of a deed most cruel and treacherous. In company with two of his sons

mon and two his sons ielly mur- red.

Mathathias and Judas, Simon was passing from city to city in Judaea for the purpose of securing the better administration of justice, and came to Jericho, where they were received with every mark of welcome and affection by Ptolemy. Invited by him to a feast prepared in their honour, they gladly availed themselves of his hospitality, without any suspicion of treachery. Their wicked host, however, had in concealment a number of armed men; and when the feast was at its height, they, on a given signal from him, rushed out and slew their master's guests, together with their attendants. Then, hearing that Simon's eldest son, John, was at Gazara, he would have killed him also, had not a timely messenger warned the youth of his danger and of the cruel fate of his father and two brothers. John hastened back to Jerusalem, and was there received as his father's successor, B.C. 135.

(*Here, with the close of the Books of Machabees, end the Sacred Scriptures. The Jewish historian Josephus, who died about* 100 A.D., *is our authority for the narrative which follows.*)

CHAPTER CXIX

JOHN HYRCANUS AND THE ASMONEAN KINGS, B.C. 135 TO B.C. 63

ısalem eged by iochus.

JOHN HYRCANUS, B.C. 135-106.—John, surnamed Hyrcanus, was the eldest son of Simon, and succeeded his father in both his dignities of High Priest and prince. Antiochus besieged the new ruler in Jerusalem; but when the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, Hyrcanus sent to him and desired that there might be a truce for seven days, because of the festival. Not only was the request granted, but the king himself sent in rich offerings for the sacrifice, bulls with their horns gilded, and

many sweet spices, besides many cups of gold and silver. Influenced by such generosity, Hyrcanus sent an embassy to him to treat for peace, which was offered on the condition that hostages and 500 talents of silver were given. The terms were finally agreed to, and among the hostages was Hyrcanus's own brother. Hyrcanus took money amounting to 3,000 talents from the sepulchre of David, or rather, from the secret treasures of the kings of Juda, and marched along with Antiochus when he made the expedition against the Parthians from which Antiochus never returned, having been slain in battle. The Syrian yoke was then entirely thrown off.

The temple of Samaria destroyed, B.C. 109.

Soon after this, Hyrcanus brought Idumaea into subjection, and imposed upon the inhabitants the rite of circumcision. He next turned his attention to Samaria, and razed to the ground the schismatical temple which Sanaballat had erected for Manasses on Mount Garizim more than 200 years before.

Aristobulus assumes the title of king.

Aristobulus I., B.C. 106-105.—In the year B.C. 106 after a reign of 29 years, Hyrcanus died, and was succeeded by his son, Aristobulus I., who besides the office of High Priest, assumed also the title of king, being the first of his countrymen to do so from the time of the Babylonian captivity. His mother because she disputed the government with him, he cast into prison, and caused to be starved to death; while of his four brothers he kept three in confinement, but his favourite brother Antigonus he allowed to remain at liberty. Soon afterwards evil reports were brought to him that Antigonus aimed at securing the throne for himself, whereupon Aristobulus, believing the calumnies had him secretly murdered. He was afterwards filled with remorse for what he had done, and being depressed in spirit, was seized with a disease, of which he died miser

ably, after a reign of little more than a year. During his short reign he succeeded in adding to his dominions part of Ituraea, the inhabitants of which he compelled to adopt circumcision.

ALEXANDER JANNEUS, B.C. 105-79.—On the death of Aristobulus, his brothers were liberated from their imprisonment, and one of them, Alexander Janneus, succeeded him. Alexander began his reign by putting to death one of his brothers, whom he suspected of having designs on his kingdom, but the other, who chose to live a life of retirement, he treated with great kindness. During his long and prosperous reign of 27 years he brought under his sway the territory that had formerly belonged to the Twelve Tribes.

exander rules territory t belonged the Twelve ibes.

A deed of the most barbarous cruelty is recorded of this prince. A number of Jews who had fought against him, after withdrawing into Bethome, were there besieged by him, and when at length their city fell into his power, he led them prisoners to Jerusalem. Some time after, when he was feasting in company with his wives, he commanded 800 of the captives to be led forth and publicly crucified. Before they died, their wives and children were cruelly put to death before their eyes by having their throats cut.

xander cifies 800 tives.

When Alexander died in B.C. 79, in the fiftieth year of his age, he left the kingdom to his wife Alexandra, or Salome, but to his eldest son, Hyrcanus, he left the High-Priesthood.

ALEXANDRA, B.C. 79-69.—Alexandra showed herself a capable ruler. She gathered together a great body of mercenary soldiers, and increased her army to such a degree as to become formidable to the surrounding nations, of whom she took many hostages. On the whole she maintained peace during her

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reign, although, as a consequence of her administration, calamities and disturbances came upon the kingdom shortly after her death. She died in the year B.C. 69, after a reign of a little more than nine years, leaving two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus.

HYRCANUS II., B.C. 69.—As already stated, Hyrcanus was High Priest during the reign of Alexandra, and now at her death the crown also passed to him. He was of a mild disposition, and was but a weakling in comparison with his strong-minded brother, Aristobulus, who, collecting an army, began to make war on his brother. After a battle fought at Jericho, many of the soldiers of Hyrcanus deserted to him. Hyrcanus fled to Jerusalem, and shut himself up in the Temple fortress, where he was besieged by Aristobulus. Unable to hold out, he resigned both the High-Priesthood and the crown, and was allowed to go into peaceful retirement, after a reign of three months.

Hyrcanus resigns the crown and High-Priesthood.

ARISTOBULUS II., B.C. 69-63.—Antipater, the father of Herod, who afterwards became king of the Jews, was at this time governor of Idumaea, and being at enmity with Aristobulus, he persuaded Hyrcanus to escape to Petra, there to seek assistance from Aretas, king of Arabia. The three confederates, with an army of 50,000 men, met Aristobulus in battle, and, having defeated him, compelled him to withdraw to Jerusalem, whither they followed him, and besieged him in the Temple.

Aristobulus is besieged in the Temple.

At this juncture the aid of the Romans was sought by both brothers; and Pompey the Great, who was then in Armenia, sent Scaurus to inquire into the matter. Having heard the ambassadors of both, he finally decided in favour of Aristobulus, and bade Aretas raise the siege.

Both brothers ask aid of the Romans.

In the following year, B.C. 63, Pompey himself came to Damascus, and soon afterwards there arrived ambassadors from the two brothers. He refused, however, to give his decision there, and marched for Jerusalem. Fearing that the decision would be given in favour of his rival, Aristobulus prepared to undergo a siege. Pompey invested the city, and after three months succeeded in taking it by assault. The number of the Romans who fell was but small; but of the Jews no fewer than 12,000 were slain, the fortifications of the Temple were dismantled, and Pompey himself, with a number of his followers, not only went into the Temple, but even entered the Holy of Holies, "and saw all that which was unlawful for any other men to see, but only for the High Priests." Out of regard for religion, he did not touch any of the sacred treasures, but gave orders to those that had charge of the Temple to cleanse it, and to present what offering the Law required. He restored the High-Priesthood to Hyrcanus, and, though he allowed him to retain the royal title, it was merely as the vassal of Rome that he was permitted to rule.

Pompey enters the Holy of Holies.

Thus was Judaea, from being an independent kingdom, made tributary to the Roman Republic; "for now," says Josephus, "we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans, and were deprived of that country which we had gained by our arms from the Syrians."

Judaea made tributary to Rome.

Among the captives carried off by Pompey were Aristobulus and his four children—two sons, Alexander and Antigonus, and two daughters. Alexander escaped from captivity, but the rest were conducted to Rome to grace the conqueror's triumph.

Aristobulus and his children carried off to Rome.

CHAPTER CXX

JUDAEA UNDER THE ROMANS, B.C. 63

Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, defeated by Gabinius.

ALEXANDER, the son of Aristobulus, having escaped, as we have seen, gathered together an army, and made an incursion into Judaea, but was defeated by Gabinius, who had been sent as pro-consul into Syria to command the Roman forces. Gabinius then confirmed Hyrcanus in the High-Priesthood, and set himself to the task of reorganising the country, dividing it into five districts, each to be governed by a separate council. He also defeated Aristobulus, who, with his son Antigonus, had escaped, and sent them both back prisoners to Rome; but the Senate restored the children of Aristobulus to liberty.

Crassus plunders the Temple, B.C. 54.

In B.C. 54, the triumvir Crassus, when on an expedition against the Parthians, came into Judaea and carried off all the gold and silver which he found in the Temple.

When, in B.C. 49, Cæsar became master of Rome, and Pompey and the Senate had fled, he liberated Aristobulus and sent him into Syria; but as Aristobulus fell into the hands of Pompey's party he was poisoned, and at Antioch Alexander, his son, was put to death by Scipio. Cæsar afterwards acknowledged Hyrcanus as High Priest, and greatly honoured Antipater for his services, bestowing on him the privilege of a Roman citizen, and making him procurator of Judaea. He also gave Hyrcanus leave to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which had been demolished by Pompey.

The real power was now quickly passing from the Asmonean family into the hands of Antipater, who straightway caused the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and took upon himself to settle the affairs of the country. Knowing,

too, the weak disposition of Hyrcanus, he made his own son Phasaelus governor of Jerusalem, and his second son Herod, a young man of great courage and daring, governor of Galilee. Such a course naturally stirred up a feeling of jealousy against him; and many of the principal Jews, seeing that Herod was a bold and unscrupulous man, and acted tyrannically, came to Hyrcanus and accused Antipater. "How long," they asked, "wilt thou be quiet under such actions as are now done? Or dost thou not see that Antipater and his sons have already seized upon the government, and that it is only the name of a king that is given thee?" One of them, Malichus, thinking to save Hyrcanus's government, secretly poisoned Antipater; but suspicion having fallen upon him, he himself was soon afterwards stabbed to death by the servants of Herod.

ntipater and is sons, hasaelus and erod.

After the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, a new partition of the Roman provinces was made among the Triumvirs, and the East fell to Antony, who made Herod and Phasaelus tetrarchs, and committed to their care the affairs of Palestine. Hyrcanus was king only in name.

c. 42.

Two years afterwards, Palestine was overrun by the Parthians during the absence of Antony in Egypt, and, to gain their support, Antigonus offered a large bribe, on condition that they would kill Herod and bestow the government of Hyrcanus upon himself. Herod succeeded in escaping with his family, but Hyrcanus and Phasaelus were imprisoned. The latter took his own life by dashing his head against a stone. To disqualify Hyrcanus from ever again being able to aspire to the High-Priesthood, Antigonus caused him to be mutilated by having his ears cut off, and had himself proclaimed king, B.C. 40.

ntigonus is roclaimed ing.

ANTIGONUS, B.C. 40-37.—After delaying a short while

in Egypt, Herod proceeded to Rome, where the Senate, influenced chiefly by the words of Antony, recognised him as king of the Jews. Arrived at Ptolemais on his return from Italy, he quickly raised an army, and marched through Galilee against Antigonus. When the latter heard that Herod was marching on Jerusalem, he exhorted his adherents to remain faithful, telling them that they would not do justly if they gave the kingdom to Herod, who was no more than a private individual and only a half-Jew, being by birth an Idumaean.

Herod recognised as king by the Roman Senate.

Jerusalem was besieged for seven months, during which time some of the cloisters about the Temple were destroyed by fire; and Herod, in order to expose Antigonus to the hatred of the Jews, ascribed the burning to him. At last Jerusalem was taken by assault, and the inhabitants were slaughtered without mercy, for the Romans were enraged at the long duration of the siege, while the Jewish followers of Herod were unwilling to leave one of their adversaries alive. The people thronging the narrow streets and crowding into the houses, or flying for shelter to the Temple, were ruthlessly slain, without distinction either of age or sex. Antigonus himself was taken prisoner and sent to Antioch, where, at the instigation of Herod, Antony caused him to be beheaded.

Antigonus beheaded by Antony.

HEROD, B.C. 37.—Thus passed away the last of the Priest-Kings of the Asmonean line; thus, at length, was the sceptre taken away from the family of Juda; and the time was at hand when He, the desired of nations, was to come: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expected of nations" (Gen. xlix. 10).

The sceptre passes from Juda.

Hyrcanus, who had been mutilated by Antigonus, was

now no longer capable of holding the office of High Priest, as the law required that no one should assume that dignity who had not all his members entire. The sacred office was from this time dissociated from the civil power, and Herod sent for a priest out of Babylon, whose name was Ananelus, a descendant of the family of Aaron, and conferred the High-Priesthood upon him.

High-Priesthood separated from the civil power.

Previous to this, Herod had married the Asmonean princess Mariamne, whose father was Alexander, the son of Aristobulus II., and whose mother was the daughter of Hyrcanus. It was at her instigation that the High Priest, Ananelus, was deposed to give place to her own brother, Aristobulus, a youth who had only just attained his seventeenth year. But, noting the affection of the people for the young Aristobulus, who, as we have seen, was an Asmonean by birth, Herod became suspicious of him, and fearing that he might prove a dangerous rival, caused him to be secretly drowned whilst bathing, and restored Ananelus.

Murder of the High Priest Aristobulus.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Herod, to the great joy of the people, began the restoration of the Temple on a scale of great splendour. A Jewish tradition records that, while the work was in progress, it never rained by day, but that the showers fell during the night; and thus the building was never hindered.

Herod restores the Temple.

After the Battle of Actium, B.C. 31, Octavian, who four years after became the Emperor Augustus, confirmed Herod in his kingdom, which now included Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, Peraea, and Idumaea. It was while Herod was king, and when Cæsar Augustus ruled over the Roman world, that the prophecy of Isaias concerning the birth of the Messias was to be

Prophecies concerning the birth of Christ.

fulfilled: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. vii. 14); and when Bethlehem, though a little town, was to be rendered illustrious by becoming the birthplace of this same Emmanuel, this *God with us*: "*And Thou Bethlehem*, Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler in Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (Micheas v. 2): so that He who *as man* shall be born in thee, *as God* was born of the Father from all eternity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE ORDER OF THE FORTY-SIX CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis.
Exodus.
Leviticus.
Numbers.
Deuteronomy.
Josue.
Judges.
Ruth.
1 Kings (*or* 1 Samuel).
2 Kings (*or* 2 Samuel).
3 Kings (*or* 1 Kings).
4 Kings (*or* 2 Kings).
1 Paralipomenon (*or* 1 Chronicles).
2 Paralipomenon (*or* 2 Chronicles).
1 Esdras.
2 Esdras (*or* Nehemias).
Tobias.
Judith.
Esther.
Job.
Psalms.
Proverbs.
Ecclesiastes.
Canticle of Canticles.
Wisdom.
Ecclesiasticus.
Isaias.
Jeremias.
Lamentations.
Baruch.
Ezechiel.
Daniel.
Osee.
Joel.
Amos.
Abdias.
Jonas.
Micheas.
Nahum.
Habacuc.
Sophonias.
Aggeus.
Zacharias.
Malachias.
1 Machabees.
2 Machabees.

Division into Classes.

1. The *five* Books of the Law are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and *Deuteronomy.* They are called the *Pentateuch* (Gr. πέντε, *five,* and τεῦχος, a book), and were written by Moses. A description of these books has already been given in the earlier part of the work.

II. The *sixteen* Historical Books are:

Josue.
Judges.
Ruth.
1 Kings (*or* 1 Samuel).
2 Kings (*or* 2 Samuel).
3 Kings (*or* 1 Kings).
4 Kings (*or* 2 Kings).
1 Paralipomenon (*or* 1 Chronicles).
2 Paralipomenon (*or* 2 Chronicles).
1 Esdras.
2 Esdras (*or* Nehemias).
Tobias.
Judith.
Esther.
1 Machabees.
2 Machabees.

These also have been described.

III. The *seven* Poetical Books or Holy Writings, also called Hagiographa (Gr. ἅγιος, *holy*, γράφω, *I write*), are:

Job.
The Psalms.
Proverbs.
Ecclesiastes.
Solomon's Canticle of Canticles.
Wisdom.
Ecclesiasticus.

These *five* are also called the Sapiential Books, because they contain instructions how to direct our lives by the dictates of sound reason.

IV. The Prophets, or the *eighteen* Prophetical Books, which are further divided into those of the *Four Greater Prophets* and those of the *Twelve Minor* or *Lesser Prophets*.

The Four Greater Prophets.

Isaias, Jeremias (who also wrote the *Lamentations*), Ezechiel, and Daniel.

The Twelve Minor Prophets.

Osee.
Joel.
Amos.
Abdias.
Jonas.
Micheas.
Nahum.
Habacuc.
Sophonias.
Aggeus.
Zacharias.
Malachias.

(The *Prophecy of Baruch* was considered by the ancient Fathers as a part of the Prophecy of Jeremias, and was usually quoted under his name.)

Apocryphal Books, as distinguished from the *Canonical Books* (apocrypha, *things hidden, obscure*; Gr. ἀποκρύπτω, *I hide from*).

Certain books, whose authenticity as inspired writings is not admitted by the Church, are called *apocryphal*, and are not included in the canon put forth by the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546). Among these may be mentioned the *Third and Fourth Books of Esdras*, the *Third and Fourth Books of Machabees*, and the *Prayer of King Manasses*.

Under the same category Protestants also class the books of *Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Machabees,* and parts of *Esther* and *Daniel.* They acknowledge that they are "holy and worthy to be read in the Church, but not sufficient to prove points of faith."

NON-HISTORICAL BOOKS.

An outline of the contents of the non-historical books of the Old Testament has been subjoined. The leading prophecies, too, concerning Christ and His Church, have been given, seeing that our Lord Himself referred to them: "All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me" (Luke xxiv. 44).

THE POETICAL BOOKS.

The Book of Job.

In the Hebrew this book is written in verse from the beginning of the third chapter to the forty-second chapter. Job, though not a Jew, was a believer in the true God, and was a priest and ruler in his own family like the patriarchs and Melchisedech. It is generally agreed that the book, didactical in purpose, was written about the time of Solomon, the golden age of Hebrew literature. The beginning and the conclusion are written in prose, and are historical. An outline of the book will be found in Chapter XIX. Before the coming of the Messias, no one more plainly professed his belief in the resurrection of the body than did holy Job: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God: whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this, my hope, is laid up in my bosom."

The Book of Psalms.

This book contains 150 separate psalms, the author of a great number of which was king David. Nothing could exceed the beauty of these Divine hymns, nor could any exhortations be more cogent than those which we find contained in them. They comprise, according to the Fathers, the sum of all the other sacred books. The Church requires her ministers daily to sing or recite some of these Psalms in the Divine office, of which they form the basis. The Psalter is divided into five sections, each of which concludes with a doxology or short hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty.

Section	1	Psalms	i.-xl.
,,	2	,,	xli.-lxxi.
,,	3	,,	lxxii.-lxxxviii.
,,	4	,,	lxxxix.-cv.
,,	5	,,	cvi.-cl.

The following prophecies are found in the Psalms:

Christ's kingdom shall extend over the whole world. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Ps. ii. 8).

Christ's passion. "O God, My God, look upon Me: why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. xxi. 2).

"I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him: let Him save Him, seeing He delighteth in Him" (Ps. xxi. 7-9).

"They have dug My hands and feet: they have numbered all My bones. And they have looked and stared upon Me. They parted My garments amongst them: and upon My vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi. 17-19).

Christ's dying thirst. "They gave Me gall . . . and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxviii. 22).

The prophet, contemplating the ascension of Christ, invites the angels to receive Him. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in.

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (Ps. xxiii. 9, 10).

The prophet speaks of Christ's coming. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire; . . . burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come" (Ps. xxxix. 7, 8).

The prophet foresees the malice of the traitor Judas. "For even the man of My peace, in whom I trusted, who eat My bread, hath greatly supplanted Me" (Ps. xl. 10).

The Messias is the eternal Son of God, and the cause of salvation to all the elect. "Let His name be blessed for evermore: His name continueth before the sun. And in Him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify Him" (Ps. lxxi. 17).

Christ's everlasting priesthood. "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. cix. 4).

The Book of Proverbs.

This book is so called because it consists of wise and weighty sentences directing men to wisdom and virtue. These sentences are also called *parables*, because, under certain figures and similitudes, great truths are often couched in them. The idea of the perfect woman contained in the last chapter is best verified in the Catholic Church. This, the first of those five books which are called *Sapiential*, is the most important of the works attributed to Solomon, though it was collected by different authors.

Ecclesiastes.

This book is called *Ecclesiastes*, but in Hebrew *Koheleth*, or the *Preacher*, because in it Solomon, as an excellent preacher, sets forth the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the things of this world, to

withdraw the hearts and affections of men from such empty toys. He points out that a man should consecrate the vigour of his youth to God, and lay up a store of virtues before the night of old age comes on: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say, They please me not." He then concludes with an exhortation to fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole business and duty of man. Although the words of Ecclesiastes are put into the mouth of Solomon, many believe that the style and language of the book speak for a much later period.

Solomon's Canticle of Canticles.

The words of the Canticle relate in their allegorical sense, to the happy union of Christ with His spouse, the Church. Indeed, some of the Fathers have asserted that the mystical sense is the only one which pertains to it, and it certainly is the true and principal one, although it may contain allusions to the marriage of Solomon with Pharao's daughter or with a Tyrian princess. In it the sentiments of spiritual love are expressed in the same terms as those of natural love. The Jews placed the Canticle among the *treasures—i.e.*, those portions of Scripture which they allowed none to read before the age of thirty. They also included in the *treasures* the beginning of Genesis, and the first chapter and last nine chapters of the prophecy of Ezechiel. Many are of opinion that the Canticle was composed by Solomon during his youth, that the Proverbs were the work of his more mature years, and that Ecclesiastes is to be ascribed to his old age.

The Book of Wisdom.

This book treats of the excellence of *wisdom*, the means to obtain it, and the happy fruits it produces. It abounds in instructions and exhortations to kings and magistrates to administer justice rightly, and teaches all kinds of virtues under the general names of justice and wisdom. Some style the work *Panaretos* (πᾶς, *all*; ἀρετή, *virtue*), as being an exhortation to all virtues. In the first portion of the book is shown how wisdom is to be obtained by prayer and by a good life, while its effects and utility form the subject of the latter part. The book is written in the person of Solomon, and contains his sentiments, although it is uncertain who was the author.

Ecclesiasticus.

The author of Ecclesiasticus was Jesus, the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, who flourished more than 200 years before Christ. It was written in Hebrew, but was afterwards translated into Greek by another Jesus, the grandson of the author, and named "The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach." In it the writer has imitated *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Book of Wisdom*, so that, like the last named, it also has often been styled *Panaretos*, giving as it does admirable lessons in all virtues.

THE PROPHETS

The Greater Prophets—Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and Daniel.

The Prophecy of Isaias.

Isaias is said to have been of the blood royal of the kings of Juda, and to have prophesied from the end of the reign of Azarias, through those of Joatham, Achaz, and Ezechias, down to the third year of Manasses. This inspired writer is called by the Holy Ghost (Ecclus. xlviii. 25) *the great prophet*, from the greatness of his prophetic spirit, by which he foretold, so long before and in so clear a manner, the coming of Christ, the mysteries of our redemption, the call of the Gentiles, and the glorious establishment and perpetual endurance of the Church of Christ. He would seem rather to have been an evangelist than a prophet. After a most holy life, he ended his days by a glorious martyrdom. According to a tradition, he was sawed in two at the command of king Manasses, whom he had reproved for his evil ways.

Isaias prophesies the perpetual visibility of the Church of Christ, to which all nations shall flow. "In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. ii. 2).

The Messias to be born of a virgin. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isa. vii. 14).

The birth and kingdom of Christ. "For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6).

A prophecy applied by John the Baptist to himself (Matt. iii. 3). "The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the wilderness the paths of the Lord" (Isa. xl. 3).

A prophecy of Christ's passion. "Despised, and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity. . . . Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, and He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. He was offered because it was His own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth" (Isa. liii. 3-7).

The Spirit of truth shall abide with the Church of Christ. "My Spirit that is in thee, and My words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever" (Isa. lix. 21).

The office of Christ. "He hath sent Me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up" (Isa. lxi. 1).

All people shall become mild by the influence of the Gospel, and shall dwell together in perfect concord. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion and the ox shall eat straw; and dust shall be the serpent's food: they shall not hurt nor kill in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord" (Isa. lxv. 25).

Men of all nations shall be converted and brought into the Church. "And I will set a sign among them, and I will send . . . to the Gentiles into the sea, into Africa and Lydia . . . into Italy and Greece, to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of Me, and have not seen My glory" (Isa. lxvi. 19).

The Prophecy of Jeremias.

Jeremias was a native of Anathoth (in Benjamin), and was sanctified from his birth to be a prophet of God. He was a priest, being the son of Helcias, probably the High Priest Helcias who in the reign of Josias discovered the Book of the Law (4 Kings xxii. 8). Jeremias was the prophet of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and predicted many things which befell both, particularly the liberation of the latter after the seventy years' captivity. He began to prophesy, when very young, in the thirteenth year of Josias, king of Juda, B.C. 629, and ended his life by martyrdom. He was stoned to death at Taphnes, according to a Hebrew tradition, by the remnant of the Jews who had retired into Egypt. For further particulars regarding his life and work, see Chapters XCIX., C., CI.

A prediction that was fully verified when the innocents were slain by Herod. "A voice was heard on high of lamentation, of mourning, and weeping of Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted for them, because they are not" (Jer. xxxi. 15).

The Lamentations of Jeremias.

This book contains the pathetic utterance of the sorrow of Jeremias upon the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is composed of five chapters in Hebrew verses, each verse beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The prophet laments the miseries of his people, and alludes to the wretched condition of the Jews after the murder of the Messias. In Holy Week the Church, in her office of *Tenebrae*, makes use of the Lamentations, inviting all, both Jews and Gentiles, to repent: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God."

The Prophecy of Baruch.

Baruch was the secretary and disciple of Jeremias, and a sharer in his labours and persecutions. This is the reason why the ancient Fathers have considered this book as a part of the prophecy of Jeremias, and have usually quoted it under his name. The book was written at Babylon. Of the six chapters which it contains, the first five consist of the letter which Baruch carried to the Jews at Jerusalem from their friends at Babylon.

The Prophecy of Ezechiel.

Ezechiel was one of the captives that were carried away to Babylon with king Joachin. He was contemporary with Jeremias, and prophesied to the same effect in Babylon as Jeremias did in Jerusalem, and is said to have ended his days in like manner by martyrdom. The writings of Ezechiel are remarkable for the number of visions recorded in them, on which account, and owing, too, to the depth of the matter contained in them, the first chapter and the last nine chapters of his prophecy were placed by the Jews among the *treasures*. See also Chapter CII.

The cedar of Christ and His Church. "I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent: on the high mountains of Israel will I plant it, and it shall shoot forth into branches, and shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar: and all the birds shall dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof" (Ezech. xvii. 22, 23).

Christ, the true Shepherd. "I WILL SET UP ONE SHEPHERD OVER THEM, and He shall feed them (Ezech. xxxiv. 23).

The waters of baptism foreshadowed. "I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness" (Ezech. xxxvi. 25).

The Prophecy of Daniel.

Daniel was of the blood royal of the kings of Juda, and was one of those who were carried away captive to Babylon under Joakim, B.C. 606. He lived at Court, and, being renowned for his wisdom and knowledge, attained a high station under successive monarchs. The Book of Daniel is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldee. Among the most remarkable prophecies contained in it may be mentioned the one which gives the precise time of the coming and death of the Messias, and the one in which he predicts the rise and power of the Macedonian and Roman Empires. Many other historical incidents and prophetical visions are also contained in it. See Chapters CIII. to CVI.

The Twelve Minor Prophets—Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggeus, Zacharias, Malachias.

The Prophecy of Osee.

Osee, or Hosea, was the first in the order of time among those who, on account of the shortness of their prophetical writings, are called the *Minor* or *Lesser Prophets*. He began to prophesy in the kingdom of Israel at the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam II. (B.C. 825-784), about the same time that Isaias prophesied in Juda. He threatened the Israelites with destruction for their impiety and idolatry, and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. His style and language are very obscure.

The Prophecy of Joel.

Joel prophesied in the kingdom of Juda, and was contemporary with Osee. He foretold the great evils that were coming upon the people for their sins, earnestly exhorted them to repentance, and comforted them with the promise of a *teacher of justice*. He also foretold the gift of the Holy Ghost and the judgment in the Valley of Josaphat.

The Prophecy of Amos.

Amos was contemporary with Isaias and Osee, and prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II. He was originally a shepherd, but was called to proclaim God's judgments to the people of Juda and Israel, as well as to the surrounding nations. He spoke at Bethel till he was forced to flee to Thecua, four leagues south of Jerusalem, where he continued to prophesy and to call the people to repentance.

The Prophecy of Abdias.

Abdias is thought to have prophesied about the same time as Osee, Joel, and Amos. His prophecy is the shortest of all, containing as it does but one chapter. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites for their pride and their enmity to the Jews.

The Prophecy of Jonas.

Jonas was of Geth-Opher, in the tribe of Zabulon, and consequently of Galilee. This fact confutes the assertion of the Pharisees (John vii. 52) that no prophet ever arose out of Galilee. He prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II. In his own person he prefigured the death and resurrection of Christ, and was the only one among the prophets who was sent to preach to the Gentiles. See also Chapter XC.

The Prophecy of Micheas.

Micheas, of Morasti, a little town in the tribe of Juda, was contemporary with Isaias. He must not be confused with the prophet

Micheas mentioned in Chapter LXXXI., who was of much earlier date. He predicted the evils to befall Samaria, Juda, and Jerusalem, the happiness of the Jews after the Captivity, and the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. "AND THOU, BETHLEHEM Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of theo shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel: and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (Mich. v. 2).

The Prophecy of Nahum.

Nahum was a native of Elcesai, probably a little town in Galilee. He prophesied after the Ten Tribes were carried into captivity, and foretold the utter destruction of Ninive by the Babylonians and the Medes, which happened in the reign of Josias, B.C. 625.

The Prophecy of Habacuc.

Little is known of the personal history of Habacuc except that he was a native of Bezocher, and prophesied in Juda some time before the Babylonian invasion, which he foretold. He lived to see his prophecy fulfilled. It is generally supposed that he was the same Habacuc mentioned in Chapter CV., who was brought to Daniel when in the lions' den at Babylon. Of the three chapters of this prophecy, the last ends with the "Prayer" of Habacuc, in which are mentioned the appearance of Christ, the last judgment, and eternity. It concludes with the following words: "I will rejoice in the Lord; and I will joy in God my Jesus. The Lord God is my strength . . . and He, the conqueror, will lead me upon my high places singing psalms."

The Prophecy of Sophonias.

Sophonias prophesied in Juda in the beginning of the reign of Josias (B.C. 641-610). He threatened the Jews with punishments for their idolatry and other crimes, and prophesied also the punishments that God would inflict on the surrounding nations. He foretold the conversion of the Gentiles, and concluded with a series of promises, chief among which was that of the conversion of the Jews before the end of the world.

The Prophecy of Aggeus.

Aggeus was among the number of those who returned from captivity (B.C. 536), and the first to prophesy after that event. He was sent by God in the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes (B.C. 520) to exhort Zorobabel and Josue, the High Priest, to the building of the Temple, which had been begun, but left off again owing to the opposition of the Samaritans. The prophet was commissioned to assure them that this second Temple would be more glorious than the former, because the Messias would honour it with His presence.

Christ, by His coming, shall make the latter Temple more glorious than the former. "Who is left among you that saw this house in its first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in comparison to that as nothing in your eyes? . . . I will move all nations; AND THE DESIRED OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. . . . Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Agg. ii. 4-10).

The Prophecy of Zacharias.

Like Aggeus, Zacharias also returned from Babylon with the band of captives under Zorobabel and Josue, and began to prophesy upon the same occasion. St. Jerome says that Zacharias showed that the Church should flourish in the Synagogue, and much more after the coming of Christ, who would select His first preachers from among the Jews. Yet few of them should embrace the gospel in comparison with the Gentiles, though they should at last be converted.

The prophet foretells Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: BEHOLD THY KING will come to thee, the Just and Saviour: He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zach. ix. 9).

Christ shall be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. "They weighed for My wages [=*price*] thirty pieces of silver" (Zach. xi. 12).

Christ shall be abandoned by His disciples. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zach. xiii. 7).

Christ shall be pierced. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zach. xii. 10).

The Prophecy of Malachias.

Malachias was the last of the prophets of the Old Law, and prophesied about B.C. 420, being contemporary with Nehemias. He foretold the twofold coming of Christ, the first of which would be preceded by the Baptist and the second by Elias; the call of the Gentiles; and their offering up to God in every place an acceptable sacrifice.

The prophet foretells the Sacrifice of the Mass. "From the rising of the sun even to the going down My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Mal. i. 11).

The prophet speaks of Christ's forerunner, the Baptist. "Behold I send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face" (Mal. iii. 1).

Elias shall come again before the end of the world. "Behold I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. iv. 5).

APPENDIX II

LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, WITH SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL VERSIONS OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Language.

All the Books of the Old Testament were originally written in Hebrew, with but few exceptions:

1. 1. *Esdras.*—Some portions of this book were written in Chaldee—viz., the letter of Reum and the king's answer (chapter iv. 8 to chapter vi. 18; also chapter vii. 12-26).

2. *The Book of Tobias.*—The original of this book was perhaps written in Chaldee, though most probably in Hebrew.

3. *Judith.*—The same remarks apply to *Judith* as to *Tobias.*

4. *Daniel.*—The Book of Daniel was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldee, the latter being found from chapter ii. 4 down to chapter viii.

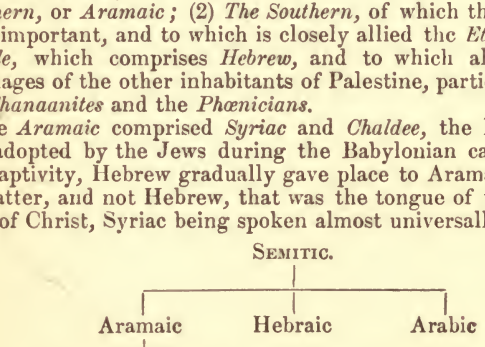
5. *Jeremias* x. 11.—This verse was written in Chaldee for the captives to use at Babylon in defence of their religion, and is translated thus: "The gods that have not made heaven and earth, let them perish from the earth, and from among those places that are under heaven."

6. *Wisdom.*—The Book of Wisdom was written in Greek.

7. *The Second Book of Machabees.*—This also was written in Greek, and begins with two letters sent by the Jews of Jerusalem to their brethren in Egypt when Greek was the common language of that country.

Both *Hebrew* and *Chaldee* belong to the great family of languages known as *Semitic,* of which there are three main branches: (1) *The Northern,* or *Aramaic;* (2) *The Southern,* of which the *Arabic* is the most important, and to which is closely allied the *Ethiopic;* (3) *The Middle,* which comprises *Hebrew,* and to which also belong the languages of the other inhabitants of Palestine, particularly those of the *Chanaanites* and the *Phœnicians.*

The *Aramaic* comprised *Syriac* and *Chaldee,* the latter of which was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. After the captivity, Hebrew gradually gave place to Aramaic; and it was the latter, and not Hebrew, that was the tongue of the Jews at the time of Christ, Syriac being spoken almost universally in Palestine.



The Septuagint.

The *Septuagint*, or *LXX. version* (Lat. *septuaginta*, seventy), also called the *Alexandrine* version, is the most eminent Greek translation of the Old Testament that has come down to us, and is the one that was commonly in use among the Jews at the time of Christ. It was so called, probably, because it was approved and sanctioned by the Sanhedrim, or supreme council of the Jewish nation, which consisted of about seventy members. According to tradition, however, it was so called because it was the work of seventy or seventy-two learned Jews of Alexandria, who, at the instigation of Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 283-247), assembled on the island of Pharos, and, with the sanction of the High Priest, Eleazar, made the translation for the great library at Alexandria.

The account given by Josephus differs considerably from the foregoing. King Ptolemy, he tells us, sent a letter to Eleazar, requesting him, among other things, to send men of good character, elders in age, and six out of every tribe, men "skilful in the laws, and of abilities to make an accurate interpretation of them." In reply to this, the High Priest wrote: "Eleazar, the High Priest, to king Ptolemy sendeth greeting. If thou and thy queen Arsinoe, and thy children be well, we are entirely satisfied. When we received thy epistle we greatly rejoiced at thy intentions, and when the multitude were gathered together, we read it to them, and thereby made them sensible of the piety thou hast towards God. . . . Know, then, that we will gratify thee in what is for thy advantage, though we do what we used not to do before. . . . We immediately, therefore, offered sacrifice for thee and thy sister [*and wife*], with thy children and friends; and the multitude made prayers that thy affairs may be to thy mind, and that thy kingdom may be preserved in peace, and that the translation of our law may come to the conclusion thou desirest, and be for thy advantage. We have also chosen six elders out of every tribe, whom we have sent, and the law with them. It will be thy part, out of thy piety and justice, to send back the law when it hath been translated, and to return those to us that bring it in safety.—Farewell."

The Versio Itala, or Italic Version.

It was from the Septuagint translation that the many early Latin ones were made,—among them being the famous *Versio Itala*, or *Italic* version (*Vetus Itala*), which, in the opinion of St. Augustine, deserved to be preferred to all other Latin editions, because it kept more closely to the words of the original, and delivered the sense in a clearer manner. The *Itala* dated probably from the middle of the second century, and remained in general use down to the time of St. Jerome.

The Vulgate.

The *Vulgate* (Lat. *versio vulgata*, common or usual version) is the name of the Latin translation of the Bible which alone is the received version of the Catholic Church, and which the Council of Trent (May 27, 1546) declared was to be held authentic. The *Itala* had suffered as many alterations in the text, and had been multiplied in so many different forms that there was no unity in the Latin text; therefore, Pope Damasus I. caused a careful revision of the text to be made by St. Jerome. This learned saint revised the New Testament and the Psalms, and made a new translation of most of the Books of the Old Testament from the Hebrew or Chaldee, whilst a few (*Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom*, 2 *Machabees*) were left untouched, or were adopted into the new edition from earlier translations. The ancient Fathers have frequently spoken in the highest terms of St. Jerome, whom St. Augustine styles a most learned man, and one perfectly acquainted with the *three* languages (*Hebrew, Greek*, and *Latin*), and he shows that his translation is accurate from the testimony of the Jews themselves. The Church herself speaks of St. Jerome as "the greatest doctor, Divinely raised up to interpret the Sacred Scriptures."

In the course of centuries, changes of translation and other alterations had entered into the *Vulgate* as they had previously entered into the *Itala;* hence the Council of Trent decreed that the Latin text should be definitely fixed. This was effected by the edition published under Clement VIII. in 1592, and which, reprinted with corrections in 1593 and 1598, has since remained the normal edition of the Catholic Church.

The Douai Version.

The translations commonly used among English-speaking Catholics are revisions of one originally made from the Vulgate by divines connected with the English college at Douai.

Under the auspices of Dr. William Allen (afterwards Cardinal), a society was formed in 1568 for the translation of the Sacred Scriptures into our own tongue. The Latin Vulgate was rendered into English by Dr. Gregory Martin, the New Testament, with the notes of Dr. Richard Bristow and Dr. Allen, being published at Rheims in 1582. The Old Testament, the notes of which were written by Dr. Thomas Worthington, was published at Douai in 1610. The whole was revised by Dr. Richard Challoner in 1750-52. An amended translation had already been brought out by Dr. Nary at Dublin in 1718, and a translation of the New Testament with excellent notes in 1730 by Dr. Robert Witham, President of Douai College. In 1791 a revised version was issued in Dublin under the direction of Archbishop Tray.

APPENDIX III

THE SANHEDRIM AND THE SYNAGOGUES

The Sanhedrim.

The *Great Sanhedrim* at Jerusalem (Gr. *συνέδριον, a council*) was the supreme judicial tribunal of the Jews. We find it existing in the time of the Machabees and in that of the New Testament, but we have no trace of it till after the return from the Babylonian captivity. It had power to deal with secular and spiritual matters, and the supreme decision over life and death was exclusively in its hands. Under the Romans it could indeed condemn, but could not execute. In the *Antiquities* of Josephus, we find the following passage: "Herod, Antipater's son, hath slain Hezekiah and those that were with him, and hath thereby transgressed our law, which hath forbidden to slay any man, even though he were a wicked man, unless he had been first condemned to suffer death by the Sanhedrim."

The Sanhedrim consisted of seventy members besides the president, who was generally the High Priest, the members being chosen from among the priests, elders, heads of families, and scribes or doctors of the law. It is said to have become extinct about A.D. 425.

The appointment by Moses of the seventy elders to assist him in judging the children of Israel in the wilderness (Num. xi. 16) has been regarded by some as the origin of the Sanhedrim, but this view is not now generally accepted. Although its numbers followed the Mosaic precedent, the institution belongs to the latter Græco-Syrian period. The seventy elders associated with Moses were a special council chosen not only for the administration of justice, but for the purpose of assisting in the government. This arrangement appears to have subsisted only during the time of the journeying in the wilderness, and ended with the leadership of Moses.

Lower Sanhedrim.—Every town is said to have had its Sanhedrim, consisting of twenty-three members where the population numbered one hundred and twenty adults and upwards, or of three members if the population were less. These Lower Sanhedrim were subject to, and their members directly appointed by, the Great Sanhedrim at Jerusalem.

The Synagogues.

The *Synagogue* (*σύν, together,* and *ἄγω, I bring*), the recognised place of public worship amongst the Jews, arose probably during the period of the Babylonian captivity, and afterwards became a regular institution. Even after the return from captivity, when the ancient order of things was restored in Judaea, synagogues were established in all the towns, and a special ritual of lectures and prayers instituted for use principally on the Sabbaths and feast-days.

The synagogues were so constructed that the worshippers, as they entered and as they prayed, had their faces directed towards Jerusalem. At the extreme eastern end was the holy ark, containing copies of the Pentateuch, while in front of this was the raised stand for the reader or preacher. The men sat on one side of the synagogue and the women on the other, separated by a partition five or six feet high. The chief seats, after which the Scribes and the Pharisees used to strive, were situated near the east end.

The Great Synagogue.

A council, known as the *Great Synagogue*, is said to have been appointed on the return of the Jews from captivity. It consisted of one hundred and twenty members, and was founded and presided over by Esdras, its chief aim being the remodelling of the religious life of the people, and the redacting of the Sacred Writings. To Esdras and the Great Synagogue, tradition ascribes the Old Testament Canon in so far as it is accepted by the Hebrews. Under the influence of this council arose a distinct order of men known as the *Scribes*, who became the copyists and recognised expounders of the Holy Scriptures, and who by degrees assumed the office of public teachers. In St. Matthew we read how Herod, being troubled on hearing of the birth of the King of the Jews, sent for the chief priests and the *Scribes*, and inquired of them where Christ was to be born.

APPENDIX IV

FALSE GODS OFTEN WORSHIPPED BY THE JEWS

Baal, Bel.

Baal was the supreme male deity of the Phœnicians and their descendants the Carthaginians, as well as of the ancient Chanaanitish nations, whose religion may be characterised as *Nature-worship*, in which the worship of the Sun-god, or Baal, held the chief place, Baal (*lord*) was worshipped under a great variety of forms and attributes, each of which became a separate god. The word came to be applied with qualifying epithets to the same divinity, regarded in different aspects, and as exercising different functions. From this it may be inferred that the plural form *Baalim* probably denoted different modifications of the same deity. As each State had its own peculiar Baalim, and as there was a new Baal for each aspect under which the sun could be adored, their number was very great. The word, in course of time, became synonymous with "*God.*" In connection with Babylon and Assyria, the same

deity is spoken of under the name of *Bel* or *Belus*. The Philistines compared the sun to a great fly, whence the name of their idol at Ekron was called *Baal-zebub*, the Fly-god, or Lord of the Flies; whereas the god of the Sichemites was Baal-berith, the Covenant Lord. *Baal-Peor*, or *Beelphegor*, was the divinity of the Moabites worshipped on Mount Phegor, and is by some identified with the Roman *Priapus*, the god of fruitfulness, and consequently of flocks, gardens, and vineyards. The word Baal enters into the composition of many proper names, as Hasdrubal (*Help of Baal*), Hannibal (*Grace of Baal*), Baal-bek (*City of Baal*). The usual symbol of the sun was the ox. This was to denote his strength, and was originally derived from Babylonia, where the image of a winged bull, placed at the entrance of a house, was supposed to guard it against evil spirits. By some, Baal is identified with the Greek *Cronos* (Κρόνος), which god corresponds to the Roman *Saturn*.

Originally Baal was worshipped as the supreme ruler and vivifier of Nature, and, when thus regarded as the Creator, had as his female reflection the goddess *Astarte*. It was from them that all fertility on the earth was supposed to proceed.

Astarte (Astaroth).

As Baal was the chief male, so *Astarte* became the principal female divinity of the Phœnicians and the Syrians; and as Baal was the god of the sun, so was Astarte the goddess of the moon, both representing the productive powers of Nature, the one being the male, the other the female principal. Both names were used in the plural; and, since Astarte was the reflection of the sun-god, there could be as many *Astaroth* as there were Baalim. In time Astarte came to represent the moon, which might be regarded as the fainter reflection or wife of the sun. Astarte was sometimes found typified under the form of a cow; sometimes she had only a cow's head; later her emblem became a star. Finally she was conceived of as the "Queen of Heaven," sitting on a lion, her head surrounded with rays. She was probably the goddess from whom the Greeks borrowed their *Aphrodite*, who later was identified by the Romans with *Venus*.

Moloch.

Moloch (Heb. *Molech*, king) is often mentioned in Scripture as the god of the Ammonites, by whom he was represented as a human figure with a crowned bull's head, being made of bronze and seated upon a throne of the same metal. His worship consisted chiefly of human sacrifices, ordeals by fire, and mutilations. The child that was to be offered to him was placed in his arms, which were extended as though to embrace, while a fire within the hollow statue scorched to death the doomed victim. The shrieks of agony were deadened by a loud noise made upon various instruments by the priests.

Moloch was probably originally worshipped as the symbol of the sun, and was perhaps the same god as the Phœnician Baal.

Dagon.

Dagon (Heb. *Dag*, a fish) was the principal deity of the Philistines, who raised a magnificent temple to him at Gaza. He was generally represented as a merman, with the upper part human, but from the waist downwards had the shape of the tail of a fish. He is by some identified with Poseidon, the Greek god corresponding to Neptune, the god of the sea among the Romans.

Chamos.

Chamos was a deity worshipped chiefly by the Chanaanites and the Moabites, who raised temples to him on the high places and surrounded them with groves. Some identify Chamos with the Sun-god, but he is more probably to be regarded as the *Comus* of the ancients, the god who presided over feasting and revelry. Even King Solomon raised a temple to this god on the mount of Olives: "Solomon built a temple for Chamos, the idol of Moab, on the hill that is over-against Jerusalem, and for Moloch, the idol of the children of Ammon" (3 Kings xi. 7).

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In the VULGATE VERSION of the Bible, on which our English translation is based, the names of persons and places are spelt according to the Greek version (*the Septuagint*) of the original Hebrew text; but as the AUTHORISED VERSION of the Bible used by English-speaking non-Catholics is a translation direct from the *Hebrew*, and as these names are consequently spelt according to it, it has been thought useful in this history to bracket them side by side with the others whenever the difference between them is sufficiently striking.

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